

THE PASSOVER



CLIFFORD HOWARD



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THE PASSOVER



The Passover

(AN INTERPRETATION)

By
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“ . . . but was in all
points tempted like as we are.”



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I

“Lord, I cry unto Thee.

Make haste unto me.

*Give ear to my voice when I cry unto
Thee.”*

The young woman in the garden started from her reverie and listened.

The lengthened shadows of late afternoon overspread the eastern slope of Mount Olivet and cast into refreshing shade the white-stone village of Bethany. Though the blush of orchard blossoms that mantled the hillside in tremulous tints of rose and pink betokened the cradling of spring, the day

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had shone with unseasonable warmth beneath a parching breath from the valley of the Dead Sea. But with the shades of approaching eventide the east wind had died away, and in its place there came now a gentle breeze from the southwest, stirring the trees with cooling promise of rain. And as it fanned the sequestered garden which lay within the enclosure of one of the village homes it carried with it ever and anon the notes of a hymn—a quavering, improvised chant, sung in monotonous refrain.

The voice was that of a woman moving back and forth across the shrubbery-hidden courtyard of the house, busied with her preparation of the evening meal. After the manner of the Jewish housewife, she was singing to herself at intervals as she worked;

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choosing her lines at random from her favorite Psalms:

*“Hear my prayer, O Lord;
And let my cry come unto Thee.
Hide not Thy face from me in the
day I am troubled.”*

She who was listening within the garden clasped her hands in sudden fervency. Above her spread the branches of a flowering olive tree, and leaning forward upon the broad stone bench on which she was seated, her arms resting upon her knees, she lifted her gaze to heaven through the patulous bower of blossoms.

Her blue cloak of soft woolen fabric, with its girdle of linen twice circling her waist in ample folds, was draped loosely about her girlish figure. In the abandon of her solitude it had slipped

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unheeded from her shoulder and revealed now beneath her open tunic a throat and breast tremulent with impulsive tears. A stray lock of hair, escaping from the fillet of burnished filigree that bound her silken headscarf, fluttered in unfelt softness upon her bared shoulder, as though both to shield and to emphasize the delicate beauty of her skin—clear almost to whiteness in contrast with her Judean type.

A quickened heart-beat heightened for a moment the faint coloring of her cheeks, and her soft-brown, wistful eyes, fixed upon the deepening sky, grew luminous with prayer, as with a mute movement of her lips she repeated the words of the Psalmist. She gave no heed to the white-blossom petals wafting about her in the freshening breeze; nor did she hear the warbling of a thrush that swayed upon the near-by

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branch of a leafing fig tree. Amid the varied stir and cadences of her sylvan quietude the words of the hymn, drifting upon the fragrant air, alone found answering consciousness.

“Quicken me, O Lord, for Thy name’s sake.

For Thy righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble.”

The sharp breaking of a twig close by aroused her to a sudden realization of another presence. A young man who had approached unobserved through the garden, was standing within a few feet of where she sat.

Evidently he had been walking rapidly, for the lower fold of his travel-stained kaffiyeh, wrapped carelessly about his head, was moist with perspiration, and a dull glow burned beneath the olive brownness of his face.

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His muscular hands and thick growth of beard suggested strength and endurance, despite his slender build; and from the fact that he was barefooted—his rough sandals hanging by their thongs from his girdle—it was evident he was not unused to the more rugged customs of outdoor life.

He had removed his cloak and was holding it upon his left arm, exposing to view a large leather purse fastened by a strap about his neck and reposing in one of the pocket-like folds of his broad girdle. Slung across his shoulder was a weather-worn traveling bag of undressed goat skin, while in his left hand he grasped a rough walking staff, upon which he now leaned as he stood looking at the young woman before him. His small, black eyes, close-set and overshadowed with heavy

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brows, giving to his countenance a stern and almost sinister expression, were fixed upon her with piercing intensity.

“Peace be unto you, Mary.” He spoke with an obvious attempt at gentleness and raised his hand in greeting. As she started confusedly and drew her cloak about her, he smiled faintly and added, “I did not think to disturb you at prayer.”

Her face flamed with sudden color. “You are welcome, Judas; and may peace be with you.” Catching her hair into place, she added hurriedly, “You are warm and fatigued: Come into the court, where you may rest, and let me fetch you food and drink.”

He detained her by a touch upon the arm as she was about to rise. “No; it is not necessary,” he assured her. “I

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cannot remain. I am on my way to Bethphage and have stopped only to say a few words to you alone."

He hesitated, and then went on abruptly, speaking with blunt earnestness and again fixing his eyes upon her: "I have spoken to your brother Lazarus and to Martha, and they tell me that you are—"

"To be betrothed to Gamaliel," she interrupted quietly.

"Only if you are so inclined," he corrected her. "They do not insist upon it. They leave you free to choose."

"I have already chosen."

"But you are not bound by your choice. You are not yet betrothed. Come, you must not be unreasonable, Mary. Your hand is free and I have an equal right to it with any other man."

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“But did I not tell you, Judas, when you spoke of this before, that it could not be? Do you not believe me? I told you then that I had chosen otherwise, and you know I have no wish to alter my choice. Why, then, do you speak of this again?”

“Because I have a right to, and because I will! There is no good reason, Mary, why you should not marry me. I am as good a man as Gamaliel. He is no more deserving than I. You will tell me that the Lord has favored him with fairer features and more gracious speech; but do these things make a husband? I can give you as good a home—a better home. You shall live in the city, with my sister Mariamne, if you wish. I can provide well for you. I can earn more than Gamaliel; I am stronger and have a better trade, and I am well known throughout Ju-

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dea. And, moreover, do you forget that through my mother I bear the blood of the Maccabees? and was not my father for more than twenty years an elder of the Sanhedrin? Mine is a worthy and noble family; and withal am I not one of the chosen disciples of Rabbi Jesus?

“It is not for me to boast, but you should know it is not given to every woman to have choice between a village dullard and a man of name and consequence. And if the Lord shall smile upon our efforts who shall say what honor or station may not some day be mine?”

Mary moved uneasily. “It is not that I am unmindful of what you tell me,” she responded to his questioning pause. “I am honored by your friendship and by your wish to marry me. This I have already told you. All that

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I know to say I have said. Perhaps if you better understood a woman's feelings you would not pain me by continuing to speak upon this matter and demanding again the answer you already know."

"But I say to you your brother does wrong to give you a choice in the matter! You will not reason for yourself. He is favorable to me and has given his consent. You should decide as he and your sister Martha wish. It is your duty under the law. I had hoped, however, that you might of your own will look with favor upon me. It is not the custom for the men of Judah to plead with the women they would marry. But I am not moved by the ways of other men. As Jacob felt toward Rachel, so do I feel toward you, Mary; and I thought to gain your good will by speaking freely to you, rather

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than to make of the matter a mere bargain with your brother according to the custom of our people. Gladly would I labor for you for twice seven years. There is no other man that feels toward you—that craves you—as I do. No other man could so cherish you as his wife. Of this your brother is already assured. He knows the man I am. I have concealed nothing from him. As a ruler of the synagogue he is fitted to choose between men, and he will tell you that he thinks better of me as a husband for you than Gamaliel. Is not this enough?—is not his judgment, his desire, sufficient to determine your choice, or must I now ask him to exercise his right, and choose for you?”

“It is your privilege as a man to do as you wish,” she answered quietly. “But you forget, Judas, that the law

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of betrothal requires the woman's consent."

"And would you think to withhold it if your brother commanded?"

"Lazarus will not ask that I marry against my will."

"Indeed! This is bold talk for a maiden! Have we returned to the days of Deborah, that a woman shall determine a man's opinion and authority? But why do you answer me thus? What have you against me, wherein do I fail, that you are so ready to question your brother's judgment?"

"You do not understand me, Judas: I have chosen otherwise. That is all."

"Bah! You speak without reason, Mary! You answer but to mock me. Yet, believe me, I am not deceived! Listen: *Why* have you chosen otherwise? *Why* will you not hearken to me?" He bent forward and put his

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face close to hers. "It is because you *love* Gamaliel! You think to hide it from me and to put me off with meaningless talk. But I am not blind! I am not a fool! You would marry this soft-tongued hewer of stone because you *love* him!" He emphasized his accusation with a note of scorn. "Tell me I speak the truth," he commanded, placing his hand on her shoulder and forcing her to turn her face to his—"it is because you love him!"

She drew away from his hold with gentle dignity. "Let us not talk of this any further," she protested. "We but waste words and put a strain upon our friendship. . . . Tell me about the Master: Where is he, and how fared the day with him?"

"I do not know where he is," responded the man with sullen impa-

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tience. "When I last saw him he was at the pool of Bethesda."

She did not appear to heed his indifference; but turning from him and looking off to the westward she commented simply, "He is probably on his way to Bethany by this time and ought soon to be here."

Her companion shook his head. "No," he said curtly; "Rabbi Jesus will spend the night in the city."

She started and glanced up hastily. "He will not return this evening! Why? What should keep him?"

Judas shrugged his shoulders. "May he not remain in the city if he is so inclined?"

"We expected him home," she answered, without argument. "Tell me, Judas, why does he remain? Has any evil befallen him?"

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“No; he is tired out; that is all. He would rather rest where he is than walk these two miles across the mount.”

“But is he not in danger by remaining in the city over night?”

“No more than if he were here.”

“And you say he is weary and exhausted? Has he been talking to the people during all the day, without rest or refreshment?”

“He did not go to the city to eat and rest. It is less than an hour ago that I myself had a taste of food for the first time since sunrise. What else could you expect on a day like this? Even before we reached the city gate this morning the Passover crowds pressed about us and demanded to hear him speak.”

“And did they believe—did they understand?”

Judas again shrugged his shoulders.

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“Perhaps there were some who did,” he answered coolly.

“But was he not well received? Did they not welcome him as they did yesterday and the day before?”

“No; and why should they? They were disappointed, and ill-humored. I knew it would be so. They have grown tired of waiting. They want something more than words. Talk and promises will not satisfy them. On Sunday, when he rode into the city, and even yesterday, when he purged the Temple, they were ready to accept him. It needed but a word to proclaim him king. They were eager to fight for him. All Jerusalem was with him. Thousands of the Galilean zealots were secretly armed. A Maccabeus would have taken the city from the Romans with half the number of men that Jesus could have commanded. The time had

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come for him to act. He should have proved himself the Messiah!"

"*Judas!*" Her exclamation was an outburst of startled surprise and remonstrance.

"Oh, I know what you would say," he retorted; "but what does a woman know about public affairs? Does it not prove anything that the people are turning from him and mocking him, when only yesterday they were ready to shed their blood for him? Is the multitude made up of fools? I tell you the time had come for Jesus to lead the people and set up the kingdom of God against the Romans!"

He flashed upon her a peremptory look of defiance. In response, she turned her eyes wonderingly to his and gazed at him for a moment in silence.

"And this from you, Judas—one of his own disciples?"

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The words came slowly, as in the utterance of a revelation not fully grasped.

“Yes; and why should I not speak what is true?” he demanded sharply. “If you understood these things you would not think to charge me with unfaithfulness to Jesus. It is because we do not want him to fail, that I speak as I do. But a woman cannot see beyond her heart! You and the rest of the women, like Joanna and Salome and Mary Magdalene, are content to sit by with folded hands and imagine there is nought else to do but listen to his teachings!

“It is not for you to tell me that he does not desire to become king or to rule the people. I know it; I have ears and an understanding. But if the people demand it—if they will not hearken to him, if they will not believe him to

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be the Messiah unless he puts himself at their head against the enemies of the nation—why should he not do so? It may be contrary to his plans and to his desires; but must that stand in the way of Israel's salvation? If the people are to be convinced, we must do as they demand. It is not for us to choose. The prophecies must be fulfilled according to their expectations. Otherwise, what does it avail? How are we to succeed?"

Mary offered no reply, save in a quivered drooping of her eyes; and Judas continued:

"Last year, at Bethsaida, the Galileans would have made him king. The whole country was mad to march to Jerusalem under his banner. But he would not hearken to them, and perhaps then it was better so; the people of Judea may not at that time have been

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ready to receive him. But the day before yesterday, when he rode into the city and allowed the multitude to hail him as the king and redeemer of Israel, we believed, and all Jerusalem believed, that he meant at last to declare himself and rally the nation about him for the setting up of God's kingdom on earth.

“The people were with him. Judeans and Galileans alike shouted his praises. Even the Sadducees stood ready to acknowledge him. His enemies were confounded and put to shame. The Roman soldiers were swept aside. The whole city arose to greet him. The Lord had turned the hearts of all Israel toward him. Not in a hundred years has so great a multitude gathered in the streets of the Holy City. The crowds were mad with joy. The sound of their shouting was heard even at Nephtoah. The spirit

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of the Lord was upon them. Their eyes were opened. In Jesus they beheld the son of David, the Christ. He stood revealed before them. He would enter the Temple in the name of Jehovah and prove to all the nations of earth by some mighty sign from heaven that the day of deliverance had come. It lay within his power to do it—the appointed hour was at hand; the opportunity was given of God,—and he should have done it! I say to you he should have done it!”

Mary turned away her head. A bright spot burned in either cheek, and for an instant her lips trembled in agitated reply. But she did not speak. Her thoughts found utterance only in a heavy, deep-drawn breath, as with averted face she waited mutely for Judas to conclude.

“You do not understand me, Mary,”

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he went on, speaking more quietly and assuming a less aggressive tone. "It seems wrong to you, perhaps, that I should talk this way, and I should have known better than to loose my tongue. There are many things that a woman cannot be expected to understand. Nevertheless, you must remember this: That I have been with Rabbi Jesus day after day for nearly two years, so that I know him and understand his teachings far better than do you. I have traveled with him from one end of the Land to the other—yea, from Lebanon to Beersheba,—and have seen and spoken with all classes of our own people and with the men of other nations; and it is not for you, a woman, knowing nothing of the world outside this little village, to put your judgment against mine.

"And, moreover, you must also re-

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member this: That I have served the Master faithfully and gladly during all these months and have made many bitter sacrifices for his sake; more than anybody knows. I gave up everything for him—my home, my earnings, my reputation. Many of my friends and kinsmen, even my own brothers, have turned against me. I have been mocked at and spit upon and stoned, and I have gone without food and without shelter, for no other reason than that I am one of his disciples. Nevertheless, through it all, have I remained steadfast and unchanging in my devotion. This he will himself tell you, for he knows that without a murmur have I stood by him in all of his trials and dangers and shared them with him, faithfully and uncomplainingly.

“And thus far what have I asked

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as recompense?—what have I received? Nothing! I would have laid down my life for him. Even now we are risking our lives by remaining with him at Jerusalem. And are we not deserving of anything in return? Is not his cause our cause? We have labored together for the same end. His mission means as much to us as it does to him. Could he have accomplished what he has had it not been for us? Does he not himself teach the people that the laborer is worthy of his hire? Two days ago our reward lay within our grasp. Success and power might have been ours—should have been ours,—but—” he checked himself and passed his hand over his brow—“Let us say no more about it. This is not the time to talk of this. I came to speak upon a different matter and, I had hoped, a more pleasant one.”

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He paused expectantly. Mary did not turn to address him, but gazing beyond him into space she spoke as one communing with herself:

“What right have they to be disappointed? Why will they not understand? Oh, how can they be so blind, so unfeeling, so cruel!”

Judas ventured to explain: “The people have every reason to be disappointed. They expected great things. Their hopes had been raised to the highest point. They thought to find in Jesus the long-promised Redeemer; and he has failed them! They looked for deeds, and he has given them only words! It may be that they have acted unjustly; they may be unreasonable; they may have asked too much; but it is not for us to blame them for expecting a savior according to the promise of the Prophets.”

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“And there was no one to encourage him,” she went on, in rapt soliloquy; “no one to offer him comfort; no one to bid him rest; and the day has burned with the heat of summer!”

Judas sought again to answer her: “We did what we could; but we became separated from him; the crowds on the Temple porches pressed about him so closely. Besides, I had business in the Upper City, which took me away from the Temple for several hours during the day.”

His words passed unacknowledged. Mary gave no sign of having heard him. She was again leaning forward, with clasped hands, in an attitude of reverie.

*“Let my prayer be set before Thee
as incense,
And the lifting up of my hands as
the evening sacrifice.”*

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Judas did not at once seek to arouse her. He stood by in silence; his gaze resting upon her bosom as it rose and fell in fugitive outline beneath the disclosive drapery of her garment. Shifting his hands nervously upon his staff he moved as if to speak; then suddenly drew close and bent over her:

“I want you to listen to me, Mary. You must listen to me!” He spoke with fierce determination. “I love you, Mary! I swear to you I love you, and I want you! You must not refuse me! Let me prove my devotion. I can wait, if you will but promise to marry me. Look at me, Mary! Listen to me! *You shall listen!*” He clutched her roughly by the arm and pulled her toward him.

She sprang to her feet with a startled cry. “Martha!” she called appealingly, turning toward the house, over-

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come with a sudden instinct of terror. In another instant, however, she had gained control of her fear, and as Judas released his hold her natural spirit asserted itself and she stood before him flushed and trembling with maidenly resentment.

She was about to speak, but Judas anticipated her: "You act like a child!" he blurted in sneering reproof. "I am not going to harm you! May not a man declare his love openly, and have I not an equal right with others? But—if you will not listen to me, so be it!" He gathered his cloak upon his arm with an angry gesture. "You have made me unwelcome, and I shall go. I have humbled myself by pleading with you and revealing my heart to you. I should have known better! It is not for you to say me Yes or No! I have been a fool to reason with a

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woman! Farewell, and may the Lord keep you!"

He turned and walked abruptly away.

Mary remained standing where he had left her. She did not attempt to recall him or make reply. With an expression of anxious indecision she watched in silence his retreating figure until it was hid from view by a turn in the path. Nor did she venture to move till the sound of a closing gate announced his departure from the garden.

With a deep sigh, she drew her mantle more closely about her and turned slowly toward the house. Through a clearing in the garden the Mount of Olives rose before her, veiled in the dreamy atmosphere of fading day. She paused and folding her hands before her gazed longingly upon the quiet vista.

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The softening light was already blending the colors of garden and field into the restful monochrome of even-tide and transforming into masses of shade the landscape's varied forms and features. Distinguishable here and there amid the deep greens of the orchards and the low-walled vineyards was a narrow road, tracing in gray outline a winding pathway across the mount. It was the road to Jerusalem; the link between Bethany and the Holy City.

With pensive eyes she followed its wayward course up the uneven slope of the mountain. Gradually it faded and was lost to sight in the glimmer of the distance; in the soft brushing of the sky upon the uplifted earth. But, as though following its onward way, she stood with quivering lip gazing fixedly into the gathering clouds beyond

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the summit—into the shadows that lay upon the city of Jerusalem.

*“Hear me when I call, O God of my
righteousness.*

*Have mercy upon me and hear my
prayer.”*

II.



II

The Holy City. Its vision lay before her in the quietude of the setting sun. Only yesterday had she been within its sacred walls, and the impress of the day was still upon her. Again she entered the city, and again she came forth wrought with a strange mingling of fear and exalted hope—for him.

It was not a dream she dreamed. She had witnessed in reality the scenes that now passed before her mental view; had borne the joy and the dread misgiving, the uplift of the wonder and the fascination that now again thrallèd her heart, as she retraced in vivid memory the hour that had been hers within the Temple the day before.

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It was early morning. In company with Lazarus she was on her way across the mount to Jerusalem.

Though the sun was only now awakening the blush upon the dewdrops that jeweled the grass and the myriad wild flowers, the Master had preceded them by more than an hour. He had spent the night at their home, in the upper room—the room built upon the roof, that it might give to the honored guest a special privacy and comfort,—and in accordance with his wont had risen before daybreak and quietly descending the outer stairway had taken his departure. Only she of the household had seen him go. She had risen betimes and was in the garden to greet him and ask God's peace upon him as he passed out in the morning twilight, to join his companions awaiting him at the village gate.

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To Lazarus the walk across the mount was a commonplace duty of almost daily performance. To her, a visit to the city was a privilege, an experience, to be enjoyed only at rare intervals during the year. On this day, however, she had pleaded for permission to accompany her brother. She felt impelled to go; to follow the Master; to witness with her own presence what the day should bring forth for him.

She did not question the meaning of her impelling desire. Her conscious mind would not translate the signals of her soul. She asked no more than that Lazarus would hearken to her wish and permit her to go to the Temple with him.

Perchance it was but an impulse aroused by the prevailing spirit of expectation and unrest. The demon-

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stration with which the Master had been greeted upon his entrance to Jerusalem the previous morning had stirred all hearts with its portent. The excitement of the city had spread to the outlying communities, and even now, at this early hour, the mount was dotted with the figures of men and women directing their steps toward the city, with no other object than that created by an eager curiosity.

As she and Lazarus reached the summit of the path, a common impulse checked their steps. Below them lay the Holy City, lighted with the flush of the morning sun. In mute devoutness they halted upon the mountain's crest and rested their eyes upon the hallowed scene.

The massive walls, with their lofty towers, springing in defiant strength from the depths of the valley; Mount

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Zion rising above all the city and shedding the immemorial glory of King David upon the transplendent palace that crowned its summit; the tower of Psephinos lifting its granite battlements into the clear blue in solitary grandeur; the marble castles of Hippicus and Mariamne; the uprearing fortress of Antonio, the tombs of the ancient kings, the glittering palaces and theatres of the Romans, and everywhere the multitude of houses shining white in the sun and covering the hills of the city like unto a giant flock of sheep—all rose before their sight in individual distinctness, then merged into a unity of vision and became but the background of the ascendant object of their gaze: the Temple.

The admiration of the world, the pride, the glory of God's people and the sanctuary of the nation's hopes

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and memories, it stood upon its sacred hill transcendent in the majesty of its beauty and its magnitude. Seeming to rest upon the very walls of the city, it rose against the sky in a succession of marble walls and columns, of courts and cloisters, of pillared porches, and stairs, and jeweled gates; terrace upon terrace, court upon court, tower above tower, until the vast upspringing structure, white as a summer cloud and seemingly no more material in its poise and graceful splendor, culminated in the overtowering tabernacle of the Holy of Holies, upon whose gilded roof a myriad spikes of gold caught the morning beams and flashed them back to heaven in dazzling fire.

For several moments neither she nor her brother spoke. With folded arms Lazarus stood and gazed at the city

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in reverent contemplation. What thoughts engaged his mind she did not know. Perhaps he but shared those of the many other villagers now standing in like attitude upon the mountain's slope, feasting their eyes upon the glory of God's citadel.

To her the picture breathed of miracle and of prayer; nay, of the spirit of God moving upon the silence of a coming storm. In its splendor lay the shadow of a mystery, a pathos, a sacredness, beyond her fathoming. The hope and the joy and the thankfulness which but an hour before had measured the full tenantry of her heart at thought of the welcome that the mighty city had bestowed upon the Master, seemed now afar off and unsatisfying; a mere groping toward that which her heart would know and make manifest.

With a new eagerness, a new sensi-

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bility she listened again to a recital of the Master's entry into Jerusalem on yester morning. As they resumed their journey Lazarus recounted to her the scene as he had witnessed it. Customarily quiet and taciturn and little given to discussion with his sisters, he spoke now with animation and unwonted freedom. He, too, was moved by the spirit that the sight of the city had aroused in her. There was an exhilaration in his voice, an eloquence in his words and gestures, a warmth of sympathy and admiration in his references to the Master, that bespoke his emotion and upheld and intensified her own fulness of heart.

With quickened steps they passed down the mountain side, following the familiar path in its windings among the olive orchards and the groves of palms and cedars, until they emerged

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upon the open ground overlooking the deep ravine of the Kidron.

Only in vague consciousness had she noted the vernal beauties of the landscape that lay upon their way. The rugged mountains of Judah and of Benjamin, painting the horizon to the south and north with amethystine lights and azure shades; the billowy hills, purple and green and tinted with rose, fading into the golden mists of the morning; the ripple of the grain fields; the verdured watch-towers of sunlit vineyards; the roads, the gardens, the valleys, and, over all, the flame of the red anemones, the lilies of the field, which the breath of spring had strewn as a blush from heaven upon the wakening earth—these and all else that glorified her pathway seemed but the incidental and necessary accompaniment to her journey upon this pregnant

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morning. Her gaze, her thoughts were fixed upon the Temple. All else was but contributory to its fascination.

Directly before them, across the Kidron, the magnificent porch of Solomon, the eastern vestibule of the sanctuary, rose above the frowning walls of the city in all its massive detail of gold and onyx and sculptured marble; and moving about as pigmies among its colossal pillars she could distinguish the priests and the Pharisees already gathered within its cloistered aisles preparatory to their daily occupations and discussions. And that she was drawing near to the city was now further attested by the increasing number of persons converging toward the bridge that spanned the ravine. Many of the Passover pilgrims who had already arrived and whose tents and booths decked the surrounding hills, were

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joining the villagers in their errands to the Temple, while along the road from Jericho numerous parties of pilgrims, afoot and on donkeys, were newly arriving and hastening forward to the city in voiceful eagerness.

Becoming part of the caravan, she and Lazarus crossed the bridge and ascended the steep hill to the city wall. The cavernous gateway beneath its armored tower was choked with a stream of humanity pouring into the city. With crowded steps they passed slowly through and came at once upon the confusing turmoil of the awakened metropolis. Skirting the fortress of Antonio on their left and passing on their right the pool of Bethesda with its depressing picture of maimed and loathsome cripples huddled about it, they made their way through a course of narrow, rugged streets that led them

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by gradual ascent to the summit of the Temple plateau. Here they turned to the left, and moved south along the ridge of the mount toward the busy center of the city.

Already the great bazaar in the lower New Town was full of bustle. The long street, crowded with its stalls and booths and shops, was fraught with exciting interest and the lure of rare merchandise and novel sights. Potters were busy in their sheds, flax beaters pounded their flax within the doorways, and everywhere artisans plied their work, some in their shops, some in the open, and all too diligently occupied with the demands of this their busiest and most profitable season, to give attention to the scenes about them or even to respond with customary obeisance to the passing of priest or rabbi. Nor, indeed, would the observance of such

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ceremony have been feasible upon this crowded morning, for, in constant number, doctors, scribes, priests and Levites, together with Essenes and Pharisees and Zealots, mingled indiscriminately to-day with the swarming crowds; brushing sanctified elbows with pagan Roman officials, military officers, guards and legionaries, and with gentile pilgrims whose babble of strange tongues and whose many-colored costumes, representative of every nation and city of the world, completed the bewildering and wondrous cosmorama.

At every step the throng grew denser and more noisy and more impatient in its haste to reach the Temple gates. Pressed and jostled on every hand as they traced their way through the labyrinth of winding and congested streets, Mary held close to her brother's side, half fearing, half enjoying the confu-

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sion and the always wondrous novelty of the great city. Only two or three times before had she been here at the hour of morning prayer and beheld the streets alive with worshipers bending their steps toward the Temple. But never had she come at this season of the year, when all the nation swarmed into Jerusalem aflame with patriotism and the festive spirit of the Passover. Never, therefore, had the city appeared to her so crowded, so restless, so charged with excitement, so tinged with the strangeness of foreign tongues and faces and unfamiliar sights.

Lazarus did not seek to enter the first gate, but moved on under the shadow of the Temple's outer wall until they reached a less crowded gateway near the Xystus bridge. Yet even here they were obliged to halt and wait for those ahead to pass through. And

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moving across the bridge that spanned the lower streets and joined Mount Zion with the Temple she beheld other hundreds—men, women and children—coming from the Upper City to swell the concourse of which she was an inappreciable though palpitating part.

Entering the gate and passing into the court of the Gentiles, she found herself suddenly in the midst of an almost deafening Babel. She could not for a moment realize that she was indeed within the precincts of the holy Temple. Never had she known the great court so thronged, so swarmed, so stifling with closeness and the odors of animals, and never had she encountered such tumult and disorder. Clinging to her brother's cloak, as he made his way with difficulty through the rabble, she followed him to the south side of the enclosure, where he

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took his stand beneath the roof of the Royal porch, beside one of its sheltering pillars. Here they were clear of the mass of people, and the slightly raised floor of the porch enabled her to gain a more extensive view of the court and its scene of confusion.

She remembered that Lazarus had said that the use of the court at this time for the sale of Passover sacrifices made of it a veritable market-place, and that if he permitted her to accompany him she must be prepared for much that was unusual and disturbing. And in her fancy she had seen the greater multitude and had pictured the sellers of offerings seated in the court instead of their customary places outside the gates, and had fortified herself against the greater stir and disorder. But the reality was all so brutally different, so gross an exaggeration of her

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boldest imaginings, so wholly beyond anything she had pictured to herself as possible within the portals of the Lord's sanctuary, that she shrank from it amazed and overwhelmed. The uproar smote her as a profanation. In its every feature the scene before her was a sacrilege, a defilement; a mockery of God.

Above the general clamor rose the coarse shouts of drovers, the yelps of dogs and the lowing of cattle, the cries of dealers advertising their stock, the strident voices of men in angry dispute, and the threats and imprecations of the guards as they struggled with the surging and vociferous rabble. And as the crowd broke here and there, she caught occasional glimpses of the money-changers seated at their tables, of oil and wine merchants in gaudily decked booths, of crafty potters press-

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ing upon the pilgrims their dishes and ovens for the Passover lamb, of sheep sellers and cattle dealers standing by their noisome pens, and of traders in merchandise having no relation to the paschal feast or the Temple services, yet, like the rest, boldly carrying on their mercenary traffic, with shouts and vulgar invective.

Lazarus bent over and spoke to her: "Remain here," he said; "I will return as quickly as possible."

He was about to go, when a sudden hush fell upon the gathered multitude and arrested his steps. The riot of tongues had abruptly ceased. In its place there arose a swelling chorus of murmurs and subdued exclamations. Evidently something of unusual moment had occurred. All business seemed instantly suspended.

With fast-beating heart and know-

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ing not what to expect, she saw the throng break apart and shrink back from the stalls and tables. Many of the people began moving hurriedly toward the western gates. Scores of men and women entering the court were swept back. Those in the center continued to draw away from the scene of the market-place, roughly pushing and pressing upon those behind them. Some untoward commotion was taking place in the midst of the court. What it was she could not at once distinguish. She was too far removed. The intervening spectators blocked her view. But above the new turmoil that had now arisen—strange cries of fear and of protest and the dissonant murmur of bewildered thousands—she caught the sound of a voice; a clear, dominating voice of authority.

Then, suddenly, as the crowd before

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her separated and gave way, she beheld the Master.

He was standing alone, in the center of the great enclosure; the focus of all the vast assemblage. A beam of the morning sun, glancing athwart the wall of the inner court, rested upon him and illumined his figure in commanding relief. His face was pale unto the whiteness of death. His eyes flashed with the fire of indignation. He held himself as one tense with passion, and the vein across his temple showed blue and throbbing.

Beside him two of the money tables lay overturned upon the ground. The others, pushed hither and thither out of the way, were empty and abandoned, save where a few of the remaining bankers were hastily gathering up their coins preparatory to leaving. Across the open space a mixed drove of sheep

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and oxen was being rapidly driven out of the court by excited keepers, followed by a straggling company of no less agitated dealers and merchants, many of them awkwardly endeavoring to conceal their money bags as they pushed their way forward; while a score of men, their backs loaded with dove cages, struggled one with another to make their escape.

Stretching forth his hand, she saw the Master move forward and address those who still tarried about the booths and stalls. His first words were lost to her in the surrounding turbulence. But as he spoke the crowds became stilled and his voice rose above the multitude, gripping her breath with its intensity. He was quoting from the Prophet Jeremiah —“Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers

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in your eyes? Behold, saith the Lord, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the fruit of the ground, and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched!" His every word rang throughout the Temple area. The very atmosphere seemed to tingle and vibrate with the stress of his eloquence.

Those who had lingered in their departure now hurriedly took up their wares and followed in the footsteps of the others, chagrined and overmastered. Some of them, as they went, glanced back at the Master, muttering and scowling, only to be instantly daunted by his indomitable and overruling presence. Not one had the temerity to resist him. Before his outstretched hand they yielded in sullen submission. Buyers and sell-

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ers alike, laden with the evidences of their unholy trafficking, passed out without a word—all, save one, who turned as he reached the outer edge of the court and in a voice hissing with malice hurled back a stinging epithet; a taunt, an insult, which choked her heart with its vileness and which even now at its recollection sent the blood to her cheeks.

Yet this churlish and solitary outburst of resentment was the only answer, the only challenge that his startling and arbitrary assumption of authority had called forth. Hundreds had obeyed him instantly and without question; going forth at his command as if in conscience-stricken approval of his denunciation of their conduct; while the few who thought to resist him were driven out as though his words had been a flaming lash. Nor

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was there a sign of protest from the thousands who remained as spectators. Mingled with the throng she saw numbers of priests and elders and Temple officials, as well as scribes and Pharisees; yet not a voice, not a hand was raised against him.

Mutely the multitude stood by and gazed upon him; apparently, like herself, astonished, fascinated, overawed by his daring and by the marvel of what he had done. There was something tragic, almost terrifying, at sight of the absolute control he held over the vast concourse, high and lowly, Jews and Gentiles alike, in the performance of an act so utterly defiant of human authority and bespeaking such supreme indifference to public opinion or individual considerations.

To the authorities it could not but seem almost to contradict the evidence

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of the senses, that this man, alone and unaided, a Galilean carpenter, without title or badge of authority, should come into the very stronghold of his avowed enemies and there publicly defy them by an open and deliberate assault upon a practice which the high priest himself had sanctioned and established. It was thus, for an instant, that, looking upon him through their eyes, she shared their stupefaction and amazement and read therein the meaning of their passive tolerance of his presence.

Out of her own first astonishment rose an instant pride, an admiration, an homage, an emotion beyond her analysis, as the import of it all surged upon her. Would the people see? Would they understand? Did not, indeed, their conduct even now speak their recognition, their acknowledg-

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ment of him? Was there in all Israel another who would have dared to do this thing? Had not the voice of the people cried out through him in his condemnation of this sacrilege? Was he not of a surety their master, their leader? But—would they acknowledge him before the wrath of the authorities? Would they remain loyal in the face of peril? And, truly, was he not in danger? Had he not imperiled his safety, his very life? Had he not, perchance, incurred some penalty of law by his act of reformation?

Her questions filled her with a confusion of exaltation and alarm. She knew not what to expect. She feared to think what might befall him in this his hour of righteous triumph. Her voice seemed struggling to cry out; to cry his name. She longed to go to

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him, to stand beside him, to share with him whatever of evil might come upon him.

With her eyes fixed upon him she watched him calmly turn and face one of the gates of the inner court, even as the people were now doing with murmurs of curiosity and excitement. And as her attention followed his gaze she caught the sound of approaching steps in measured tramp, with the intermittent clank of arms, and presently, mingled with it, the hurried tinkle of bells.

Once more the crowd fell back, leaving clear a still greater space in the center of the court. She drew instinctively closer to Lazarus, her body aquiver with a sense of impending calamity. He, too, seemed stirred with apprehension. He placed his hand on her arm as if in readiness to shield

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her; and together as they looked they saw the high priest with his guard of Roman spearmen enter the open space and approach the Master.

Had she not heard the name "Caia-phas" breathed in awed whisper about her, she would none the less have known it was he. His imperious bearing and the splendor of his distinctive dress at once proclaimed him. Despite her agitation, she could not but observe his purple mitre and its golden epigraph; his violet robe, blazoned with embroidered pomegranates in red and crimson, and edged with a row of golden bells which noised his every movement; his gorgeous-colored coat, clasped on each shoulder with a brooch of onyx and girdled with a scarlet sash of richest silk; and upon his breast, fastened with rings of gold and blue silken cords, the sacred breastplate of the

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high priest, scintillating with the brilliancy of its twelve emblematic jewels.

In the pomp of his glittering vestments and armored bodyguard and in the majesty of his exalted rank, he halted before the Galilean teacher.

Face to face they stood for a breathless moment without speaking.

Alone and defenceless, his simple provincial garb paling into shabbiness before the magnificence of the other's raiment, the Master returned with a look of calm interrogation the accosting stare of the imperious ruler of the Temple.

"Who are you who has dared to do this thing!"

The words of the high priest, thundered in a voice of official wrath and outraged dignity, fell terrifying upon her ears as the infuriate outburst of a

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storm. His hand upraised, trembling in its gesture of menace, and his fulsome countenance red with fury, he bent forward toward his opponent, glowering and venomous.

“Who are you!”

The repeated demand, with all its brutality of contempt and snarling hatred, was hurled into the very face of the Master.

She felt, she shared with him, the flush that sprang burning to his cheek. Were she a man she would have leaped forward and in the face of destruction made answer for him. Her eyes went blind with tears. The throbbing of her temples seemed to deafen her, as in the tense silence of the multitude she awaited his response.

Through the blur of her vision she saw him slowly raise his hand and draw himself up to his full height. His lips

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parted, he was about to speak, when suddenly, out of the stillness, came the voice of a child in clear, ringing treble:

“Hosanna to the son of David!”

In an instant the cry was multiplied. From all parts of the court rose an impulsive chorus of children's voices, repeating in spontaneous accord the song of praise with which their elders had hailed the Master on yester morning:

*“Blessed is he that cometh in the
name of the Lord!*

Hosanna to the son of David!

Hosanna in the highest!”

She found her own voice swelling the the final outburst. About her, everywhere, men and women were taking up the words of the children and shouting them forth in exultant relief. A wild enthusiasm had seized upon the assem-

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bled host. The unholy clamor of the market-place was transformed into a tumult of joy and religious ardor. The crowds swayed and moved forward, gesticulating and crying the name of Jesus in expressions of praise and acclamation:

“Hosanna to the son of David!”

The people had made answer for him. They had proclaimed him in the face of official impeachment. In the very presence of the high priest they rejoiced in the rebuke that Jesus had administered to him. The man that Caiaphas had sought to accuse and humiliate before them, they were applauding as their leader, as the nation's savior; nay, as their ruler; for amid the shouts that assailed the air she heard ever and again the cry of *king*—“Jesus, our king! Hail to the king, the son

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of David! Hosanna in the highest!"

She saw him turn and acknowledge the cries of the people with a look of gratitude, yet accompanied with a gesture of deprecation. Without deigning again to notice the high priest he moved forward toward the porch of Solomon and was lost to her sight in the acclaiming throng that surrounded and followed him.

Had he not indeed won the hearts and the understanding of the people? Was she not herself a witness to the triumphant crowning of his long and bitter struggle for recognition? The answer was blazoned in the air. It was upon the tongues and upon the faces of all men. Even yet the clamor of its affirmation beat upon her ears. Yet the spirit within her did not respond. Knowing not what to speak, how to make manifest that which lay within its

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untutored depths, it touched her heart and set it atremble with questioning unrest, even as it glowed with her bounding joy and exultation.

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But now, as the memory of it all came back to her, enveloped in the gloomed and torturing shadow of Judas, she read its meaning—and understood.

The doubt, the fear, the inquietude, that had lurked unbidden and unformed amid the scenes and the remembrances of yesterday, now spoke their message. And in the revelation that now came to her out of darkness she recounted with a new understanding the words the Master had spoken to her when last he had sat with her in this his favorite resting place within the garden.

He was speaking to her beneath the olive tree. She heard again each word as it fell from his lips. With out-

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stretched hands she approached and drew near, as if in reality he were there. In the eerie twilight and the uncertain shadows cast by the tree upon the garden seat, she seemed now to see him, resting in half reclining attitude in his accustomed place, with herself seated at his feet absorbed in the wondrous music of his voice.

With a stifled, half frightened cry, she sank upon her knees, and throwing her arms upon the edge of the seat bowed her head upon them and shook with the sobbing of an overburdened heart.

III

III

Martha ceased her singing. The evening meal which she had been preparing with leisurely accustom was now ready and awaited only the arrival of its partakers. It was the common evening repast of Judean villagers, consisting simply of milk and bread with bits of cold mutton, and some dried fruit, and in recognition of the advent of spring was spread on its low table under an arbor in the courtyard.

A high wall, verdured by masses of shrubbery and running vines, formed two sides of the court and shut it in from the gaze of the street. Dividing it from the garden was a hedge of

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pomegranate bushes, their dark-green foliage aglow with the warmth of their crimson blossoms; while the house itself, a simple, white-stone cottage, extending across the end of the court, completed the enclosure.

In the center lay a circular stone basin brimming with mountain water. Moss and creeping plants covered the low coping and lent an added touch of freshness to the shallow pool, whose clear, unruffled surface mirrored the twilit sky in soft reflection. The perfume of some early-flowering grape blossoms filled the air with fragrant prophecies of summer, while the trickle of water in drowsy overflow and the hum of tarrying bees gave audible expression to the spirit of peace and quietude that rested upon this garden-cloistered home of Lazarus and his two sisters.

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Martha was the housekeeper of the little family. In measure of years she was still a young woman; but, as a widowed housewife, faithful to the customs of her people, she had subordinated without question the charms and aspirations of youth to a settled life of domestic fealty. Her brief married life, now a mistful memory of seven winters, had come to a close ere she had passed the threshold of her twentieth year; a bereavement still attested by her style of head-dress—a close-fitting wimple, framing her face in oval outline—and by the distinctive plainness of her dark woolen gown. Full-sleeved and girdled primly above the waist, it reached from her neck to her ankles, a loose, cloak-like garment, without relief of ornament or color. A mantle of the same material, thrown across her shoulders, completed her brightless at-

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tire, except for a bracelet of unburnished silver which circled her left arm.

Her task completed, she walked across the courtyard and opened the gate. Partially concealing her face with her mantle, she looked out upon the street, a narrow, uneven road winding down the village hillside between vineyard hedges and the blank walls of a few scattered houses. There was no one in sight, save a boy swinging a water jar and strolling with laggard feet on his way to the village fountain. From her station in the gateway she watched him with indolent curiosity until he disappeared from view beyond the bend at the foot of the hill.

For some time longer she continued at her post, picking idly at a wayside stalk of coriander and scanning the empty road with expectant gaze. The street remained deserted; and only the

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distant ripple of women's laughter from the direction of the fountain stirred the quiet of the evening.

Finally, with a murmur expressive of disappointment, she relinquished her vigil and was about to step back into the court, when a man, bearing himself with the familiar dignity of a Pharisee, though without the usual embellishments of dress, turned into the street and came forward up the hill. With her hand upon the latch she tarried within the shadow of the gate and observed him with the characteristic interest of a villager curious to identify a stranger or ascertain his destination; and when assured by his near approach that he was seeking her house and would speak to her, she remained standing in the gateway and with downcast eyes awaited his greeting.

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“Peace be unto you, daughter of Israel.” He halted before the gate, and smiled upon her with kindly complaisance as she looked up and returned his salutation. “You do not recognize me,” he went on; “yet do I know you to be Lazarus’s sister Martha, widow of Amariah. I am told, Martha, that Jesus of Nazareth lodges here with you. Go and say to him that a friend awaits him without, who has that to say to him which will rejoice his heart.”

“Rabbi Jesus does indeed lodge with us,” responded Martha; “but he has not yet this day returned from the city, nor do I know at what hour to expect him. He might perchance be coming even now with my brother Lazarus, in search of whose arrival you find me at the gate. However, I pray, sir, that

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you will enter and wait for him and share with us our meal.”

“No,” returned the man, “I cannot tarry. Only now am I come up from Jericho and must hasten onward with my party, that we may reach the city before nightfall.”

“Will you not then leave with me your message for the Rabbi,” inquired Martha, “or make known to me your name, that I may tell him which friend of his was here?”

“Rabbi Jesus does not know me,” responded the stranger. “Never has he spoken to me. Perhance his eyes have never rested on me. If ever he has heard my name it has been to him but the name of a scribe noted for his hardness of heart and his contempt for the teachings of a Galilean. Nevertheless, has he now no truer friend than I;

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no more affectionate disciple; nor does there live upon the earth a man who holds for him a deeper gratitude and reverence. It was but to tell him this, that I turned aside upon my way; to tell him that through him have I received the Light; that verily do I know that the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Martha answered his pause with a look of questioning surprise. "Aye, well may you marvel," he assured her, "that a scribe of the school of Sham-mai should thus cast aside the prejudices of his training and traditions and accept the word of an unschooled Nazarene. Yet I say to you, Martha, that were it given to a woman to understand these things, you would know that this is the least of the miracles that lie within the power of the Spirit. In this Nazarene is the Truth; through him is the Spirit vouchsafed of God to

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men. Though he has not so much as placed his hand upon me or breathed on me a conscious blessing, yet in his name and in the name of the Father am I able to heal the sick and to cast out demons and to gather to myself whatsoever of good my soul desires; for in me, through my acceptance of him as the Light of God, is the Spirit become revealed, and the Truth has made me free. If, therefore, these signs which now attend me in evidence of my faith are not present with any man who claims to follow him and honor him, it does but demonstrate he does not truly know him; for as I have myself heard him declare, and as my own experience teaches me, those who in faith believe his words and understand him, and in their hearts accept the Truth, shall do the works that he does and make manifest their oneness with

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the Father. . . . Tell me, Martha: who say *you* that Jesus is, and what say your brother and your neighbors?"

"Truly, sir," answered Martha in some confusion, "as a woman and one devoted in true conscience to her allotted place, I am not competent to discuss the teachings or the person of our guest. My duty unto him is to be watchful of his comfort and to see that he is satisfied in those material things which all too often are forgot by others in thinking overmuch upon the giving of their hearts and minds. That Rabbi Jesus is a teacher and physician gifted of God with wisdom and rare power, is all that is given me to say, save only that he is our friend, best loved of any that we have."

"And do *you*, Martha, speak thus guardedly?—you, who with your own eyes have beheld him triumph over

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death?—you, to whom it has been given to stand in the presence of Jehovah as witness to a miracle transcending in its marvel the mightiest works of the prophets? Do you forget what, scarce four months ago, took place at the sepulcher in yonder field?”

“Nay, chide me not with forgetfulness of his goodness and compassion on that occasion, nor of the marvel of our beloved brother’s return to us from the tomb. Believe me, sir, these things shall remain forever in my memory.”

“But does not the resurrection of your brother from the grave have meaning to you concerning the office and the character of Jesus? By what power, think you, did he do this wonder?”

“Sir, I know not. The powers that are given to physicians to heal the sick and restore the dead are beyond my

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understanding. Rabbi Aaron Ben Nemuel, of Bethphage, who was with us at the restoring of Lazarus, declares that he himself once brought to life a man upon his bier; and, moreover, have I often heard it said, that one may seem to die and to the sight and touch become a corpse, beyond all sign of breath, and yet be only sleeping. But mysteries such as these are not for women to discuss or strive to understand. They are of God, and none but doctors and the wiser men may give them meaning. Therefore, my lord, I only know, that, whereas my brother Lazarus was as one dead, and buried, he now lives and is with us again in health, through the goodness and the power of Rabbi Jesus."

"Aye, Martha, it were indeed idle for you to seek to know the Truth, for the light is not in you! As Jeremiah

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lamented over the people because of their ignorance, so do I say to you, Hear now this, O foolish woman, and without understanding; who have eyes, and see not; who have ears, and hear not: He whom you shelter beneath your roof is more than rabbi, more than physician; aye, more than prophet. He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed of God for the salvation of Israel! This do I declare to you through the Spirit. Nevertheless, you will not receive it; for if by that evidence through which *my* eyes were opened—a stranger and a scoffer—this revelation was not borne in to you, no words of mine can carry fire to your heart. Think not, however, that I chide you, Martha. My heart has only pity; and not alone for you, but for the others there among you who on that day of revelation beheld the Light, and

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knew it not. And yet how anyone can live within the memory of that scene and fail to know the Truth, transcends my understanding.

“Before me now, as in the dusk I stand again within the precincts of your home, I see the wondrous spectacle repeated: With my companion, Rabbi Tola—myself a stranger to your house—I come to join the mourners on the fourth day of your sorrow. And while we sit soft-moaning in the darkened room, suddenly your sister Mary rises and hurries forth. 'Tis whispered to us, ‘She is gone to mourn before the tomb;’ and straightway, as her comforters, we follow her; when, lo! before we reach the burial field, we see her fallen prostrate at the feet of Jesus, the Nazarene carpenter, associate of publicans and sinners, an out-

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cast from the city synagogues, a man whom I and all my friends despise.

“ ‘Where is he laid?’ we hear him ask, and straightway you and Mary lead the way. And when we come before the grave we see that he is weeping. My heart goes out to him in sudden strange compassion. I know not why it is; for in my mind I scorn him and I ask, why, if so tenderly he loved this friend, he did not save his life through that inspired power which he claims to have from God for giving health to lepers and purging men of sin. And when in gentle voice he asks that we will move the stone that shuts the grave, I am amazed and filled with nameless fear. And yet at once, scarce knowing why I answer his command, I help with others to remove the heavy seal.

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“And now the sepulcher stands open, black in its mystery of death; and all is still. The calm of evening broods upon the scene. The breath that whispered from the wilderness is gone. There is no sound, except the murmured weeping of the women. A loneliness, a dread expectancy, a silence tense with holy awe, enwraps us as an overshadowing presence. The lips of Jesus move as if in prayer; and as I gaze upon his shrouded form I see a light, a sudden glory, come upon him; and trembling as a frightened child I sink upon my knees. I seek to close my eyes, but some resisting power holds my gaze upon him. And now I see him raise his head and look within the darkness of the cavern. I hear him speak. He calls aloud to him who lies within the tomb. His voice is as the voice of God. The very heavens seem

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to speak the words: '*Lazarus, come forth!*' And, lo! scarce has the silence come again upon my startled ears, when he, that Lazarus who was dead, appears before us at the opening of the grave!"

Martha looked up. The stranger had stopped abruptly. She saw him gazing into space, his eyes wide-open and fixed as on some wondrous vision.

Slowly he again turned to her, and lifting his hand in benediction spoke with solemn impressiveness: "Blessed are you, Martha; blessed is this house; for, though you know not the reason thereof, the name of your home with that of Abraham's at Mamre shall be hallowed in the memory of men for all time to come. The Lord keep you and give you peace."

Not until he disappeared from sight and the street was again deserted did

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Martha stir from her place. Stepping out once more, to command a better view of the road, she looked searchingly down the hill. No one was coming; the street remained empty. With a shrug of impatience, she drew back into the court and closed the gate.

As she faced thoughtfully about she found Mary standing beside her.

“Lazarus is not yet coming,” she announced, in answer to Mary’s unspoken question, “and we shall have to wait our meal for him. However, he must soon be here, for he thought to return a full hour before this. As to Rabbi Jesus, we can only hope he will be here to take supper with us; but as he did not lead us to expect him before nightfall, we probably ought not to look for him for another hour or more.”

“Perhaps we ought not to expect the Master even then,” rejoined Mary.

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“If he is weary and overworn with the day’s trials, were it not better that he rest nearer the city?”

Martha did not detect the note of appeal in her sister’s question. “Yes,” she answered decisively, “it would indeed seem the wiser thing to do. He should spare himself any needless fatigue. He has call for every minim of his strength. Indeed, I sometimes fear that our pride at having him with us makes us unmindful of the added time and effort that the walk across the mount demands of him. And that he should thus come to us, when at times he scarce can speak for weariness and he might so readily bide in comfort and equal safety among his friends in the city or at Bethphage, is but another of the many things beyond our comprehension. Truly, we ought not to expect him day after day. Perhaps we do

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wrong in urging our hospitality upon him during these days of exacting duties and hardship, when he has need of every moment of rest.”

Mary took hold of Martha's sleeve. “Then surely we must not look for him to-night,” she said. “Of all days, this has been for him the hardest and most trying. He has been speaking since early morning, without food or rest. Think of it, sister—in all the heat of this day, within the stifling closures of the Temple, hour after hour, and not a mouthful to eat, and not a moment's rest! . . . But, O sister, it is not that alone! It is not only that he is faint and weary of body; he is sick at heart. His spirit is overborne with grief and disappointment. He was not welcomed by the people. They did not receive him gladly. They are not ready to accept him. Oh, the cruelty

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of it! the pain; the bitter, bitter disappointment, after the glorious promise of yesterday!”

She choked back a sob, and drawing closer to her sister went on with throbbing intensity:

“His labors among them are gone for nought! They do not understand him—nay, they *will* not! They have hardened their hearts against him. Their homage of yesterday is become a mockery. In their blindness they are turning from him; even—even his disciples! Oh, why will they not see! Will the light never come to them? Will they never know, never understand?”

Martha laid her hand for a moment on Mary's bowed head. “Truly, the Master has had much to bear,” she said consolingly, “and disappointment has followed only too often upon his labors.

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But do not let your fancy become overwrought, for perchance in his own heart and understanding he was well prepared for the reaction which even I might have told you must surely follow upon the thoughtless excitement of the past two days. But what have you heard? Who has told you of the day's happenings in the city?"

The sisters had moved slowly across the courtyard and stood now by the table, beneath the arbor. Hidden thus from view of the gate they had not observed the entrance of Judas.

He had come in quietly and was about to approach the house, when he became aware of the sisters' presence. Overhearing Martha's question, he halted near the gate, within the shadow of a tree, and waited there, a listener to their conversation, without making his presence known.

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“What news have you heard?” repeated Martha. “Have you talked with anyone who has been in Jerusalem to-day?”

“Yes,” responded Mary; “Judas was here, in the garden, a short time ago. He told me.”

“And if the news he bore was indeed so grave as your fancy has pictured it, would he not also have come to me? and would there not have been others, among our neighbors, who would sooner have told us? Let not your heart, dear Mary, be so readily troubled with imaginings. Was it not, indeed, upon quite another matter—on business of his own—that Judas came to talk to you?”

“That you have spoken truly, sister, makes only the more pitiful his unconcern for the Master. He would speak only of himself, think only of himself,

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when his every thought and effort should have been for the comfort of the Master.”

“Then he did speak to you on a personal matter—on a matter concerning yourself?”

“Yes; it was that for which he came. . . . But it cannot be, sister. You and Lazarus would not ask that I marry a man against whom my heart rebels.”

“We had hoped he might find favor in your eyes. He thinks well of you, Mary, and he would make you a good husband. Moreover, it is but seemly that a maiden of your age should not longer delay the duty ordained for her by the Law.”

“I only wait, sister, for you and Lazarus to approve my choice and arrange the settlement. I have given

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my promise. I am ready to be betrothed."

"Then your choice remains steadfast with Gamaliel? Is it because you truly care for him?"

Mary sought her sister's hand. "I am content to wed Gamaliel, that the Law may be fulfilled, and to be to him a helpmate and the bearer of his children. Neither he nor the Scriptures can ask more than this." Then clasping Martha's hand in both of hers, she added with sudden emotion, "But is it meet, is it right before God? Answer me, sister: were it not better, were it not holier, that a woman remain a virgin, than that she give herself in wedlock unto one and bear within her heart the image of another?"

Martha returned her sister's gaze with a look of troubled wonderment.

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“These are strange thoughts for a Jewish maiden,” she commented solemnly. “It is not given to the women of God’s people to set their heart’s desires against the Commandments or against the wisdom of their elders. If, therefore, your thoughts incline to one whose life God has decreed shall not be joined with yours, your duty lies full clear: to put him resolutely from your heart and to fortify your spirit for all time against the thought of him.”

“No! *no!* O sister, do you not know of whom I speak?” With a sob like that of a child’s, Mary bowed her head upon Martha’s bosom. “It were easier to stop the beating of my heart than to efface from it the thought of him! . . . No! no! It is the thought of him that pulses in my every breath! It is my life; my being! There is no moment, waking or in

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dreams, that is not hallowed by the thought of him! . . . If this be love, and if the love of woman for a man be sinful in the sight of Heaven, may God have mercy on me!”

Martha did not at once respond. Her eyes, lighting for a moment with an expression of pained understanding, grew dim with instant sympathy. She drew Mary closer to her, and with a touch of comforting tenderness passed her hand softly across her sister's cheek. “Tell me, Mary,” she questioned, finally—“why have you not spoken of this before?”

“I could not. I would not. I meant not to have spoken of it now, but my heart has cried out in its pain. Forgive me, sister. Do not chide me. Bear with me in this my hour of darkness.”

“I have nought to forgive, dear

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child; nought to chide you for, save only that you have waited until this day to share your burden with me.”

“No, sister; no! Do not ask that I should sooner have shared it with you. I would that I might for all time have borne it in silence. I have prayed that never might there be need that even you should know—only the Father. Each day I have cried to Heaven for strength to uphold me. Each day I have prayed for courage and sustaining comfort. It is not that God has not heard me or has forsaken me: It is but because I am weak and unworthy, that in this hour I am fallen before the storm.”

With caressing fingers Martha brushed back the hair from Mary's brow. “And he?” she asked—“does he know aught of this?”

“Our Father in heaven forbid!

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Oh, pray with me, sister, that it may not be! Yea, rather may my spirit perish than that for one short moment he should glimpse the passion of my heart! Nor do I pray this only that I thus may spare my shame, but that he may not know my grief; and knowing, suffer with me. Therefore, God grant it shall not be! . . . And, Oh, pray with me, sister, that his life be spared a tribulation such as mine! All else his heart has borne and suffered. That he might serve the Father, he has sacrificed all that the world has held for him of peace or joy or consolation. The griefs and sufferings that may fall to man have all been his—all, save one. Nor has he scaped the world's temptations that beset the souls of men, excepting only this. Yea, he has drunk the bitter waters from each fount of human sorrow, save only one—the

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deepest and most bitter of them all. Could I but know that it is given me to bear this pain for him—that through my love he will be spared the knowing of its agony,—my heart's inquietude would fill my soul with peace.”

Martha gently relaxed her embrace and turned to cast a look within the court.

“I thought for a moment I heard approaching steps,” she explained. “Perchance it was but the wind moving the gate upon its latch. However, Lazarus must soon be here,” she added, turning to the table, to busy herself with the trimming of its lamp, “and we must be prepared to greet him with countenances untroubled, lest he question our hearts.”

Obediently, Mary adjusted the folds of her headscarf, and, draping her

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mantle about her, stepped quietly to the pool and bathed her eyes with its cooling water. Then raising her head she stood with drooping arms and looked out across the sky, where now a first faint star glimmered uncertainly in the pale glory of the ascendant moon.

And as she stood thus, unseeing, unhearing, the gate opened noiselessly, and the figure of a man appeared within the entrance.

His white-robed form, shadowed against the leaden light of the sky and bearing in its poise the impress of a holy presence, seemed the momentary embodiment of the divine silence of the evening.

With a slow and almost tremulous movement he raised his hand to the wall and stopped as if to rest. It was the act of a giant will struggling

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against unutterable weariness. His countenance was dimmed in shadow; yet in the night's effactive blending of his features there lay a haunting tracery of pain, the immutable expression of a stricken heart.

With weary effort he lifted his head and gazed within the court.

Suddenly, and for one brief instant, his face lighted with a smile; his lips parted as though to speak, and holding out his arms toward the figure at the pool, he stood as one transformed and glorified with joy. Then, with a deep indrawing of his breath, the light passed from him. His arms drooped slowly to his sides, and once more his head sank upon his breast.

IV

IV

*“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me;
Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.”*

As Martha's voice trailed into silence, Jesus slowly lifted his head. With a heavy and exhaustive sigh he aroused himself as from the thrall of an overbearing despondency. Drawing himself resolutely erect, he walked forward within the court and approaching the pool gave greeting to Mary, who had turned and recognized him at the sound of his steps.

“The Lord be with you, Mary.”

He spoke the accustomed salutation

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quietly and with gentle benignity. And in return she answered simply, "The Lord bless thee, Master; and welcome."

As they spoke, Judas stole forth unnoticed from the concealing shadows, witness of all that had occurred within the court, and passed out noiselessly through the gate.

He stopped outside the wall and stood as one stressed with indecision. His hands were clenched, and the fitful glimpsing of his teeth gave meaning to his subdued mutterings. He glanced down the darkened road and again at the half-closed gateway behind him. Once he stepped back abruptly as if to re-enter the court, but checked himself, hesitating and uncertain, and bent his eyes to the ground. Finally, with a gesture of passionate determination, he struck his staff heavily upon the

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earth and set forth with hurried stride down the winding street.

Reaching the village fountain, about which a few belated women and children still lingered with their pitchers, he turned sharply to the right and took his course along the road that led up and across the mount.

The moon shining yellow in the dusk made distinct his pathway among the outlying houses and gardens; and in the guidance of its light, as he passed beyond the village, he increased his gait to a rapid, impatient walk, using his staff as an aid in hurrying him forward up the mountain's rambling and acclivitous road.

Glancing ahead as he neared the summit, he discerned the approaching figure of a man. He sought to turn aside and avoid a meeting, but before he could act upon his purpose the man

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accosted him: "Peace be unto you, Judas. You appear to be in haste; and wherefore, at this hour of the evening? Come, return with me to the village and share our supper with us."

The two men met as he spoke. Judas, however, did not stop. He merely slackened his pace for a moment and answered curtly, "Peace to you, Lazarus. I am late; do not ask me to tarry. My sister awaits me at Bethphage. Farewell, and the Lord keep you."

He passed on and resumed his spirited walk. He did not once look back, but pushed forward to the summit, scowling and muttering.

He was following the main-traveled road, which passed around Bethphage on its way to Jerusalem; but as he crossed the ridge of the mount he turned off into one of the paths that

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led down to the city by a more direct route.

The fires of the pilgrims who were camped upon the hills beacons the landscape on either side of him. Flickering red amid the black shades of the orchards, or blazing in pale lumination upon the open fields, they stretched away in scattered groups until they waned as restless stars upon the vague horizon. As now and again there fell upon him the glow of some near-by blaze, he lifted his hand to his face or hung his head; and passing rapidly down the mountain side, oblivious to the wondrous sight of the moonlit Temple before him, he crossed the bridge and with labored breathing mounted the hill beyond; pressing on with unabated haste until he passed the guard at the gate and entered the city.

The streets were animate with holi-

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day festivity. The limpid radiance of the moon, together with the flaring lamps of the shops and spangled bazaars, the hundreds of torches flaming upon the tower battlements, the glow of courtyard fires, and the sparkle of the myriad candles of the Temple, illumined the city with a magic of brightness and fantasticism that drew the pilgrims and provincial visitors into the streets and irresistibly held them there in joyous and wondering crowds.

This scene of gaiety, however, held no allurements for Judas. The lights, the chatter of voices, the presence of the people, seemed rather to repel and irritate him. With a fierce, rough impatience he pushed his way through the companies of men and women moving along the crowded streets or gathered about the markets. Wherever it was possible, however, he avoided the

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thoroughfares. He chose the unfrequented streets, the byways, the postern passages; apparently indifferent to the danger that lurked in their obscurity.

Now in the open and again through low archways and covered alleys, he hastened on through the hidden ways of the tangled city. Twisting, vagrant, obstructed, without direction, without order, choked and slimed with the wash of rains and everywhere reeking with the uncleanness of huddled humanity, they led him in toilsome winding through a never-ending congestion of buildings, courts, walls, stairs, terraces, galleries and archways—serried masses of masonry in all its varied forms, pressed and jumbled together in the labyrinthian disorder of a thousand years of unguided building.

Yet Judas found no seeming difficulty in tracing his way. He moved

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steadily forward with an assurance of direction that only an intimate familiarity with the city could have made possible. Down the slope of the Temple mount, across the Tyropeon valley, through the unsavory quarters of Akra, and up the steep ascent of Mount Zion to the city of David, with its palaces and patrician homes, he pressed on with feverish step; emerging now and again upon some thoroughfare or market-place, only to turn aside at the first opportunity and disappear into the darkness and maze of the city's unchartered windings.

Only once did he stop. He had come upon an elevated and comparatively open space in the lower city, when in sudden prospect there appeared before him the mount of Golgotha, just visible above the city's western wall. Standing upon the summit of the rounded

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hill, black and sharply outlined against the night, was a solitary cross. Looming thus before him in unexpected revealment, he halted and shrank back with a warding uplift of his arm. Its gruesomeness, its isolation, its alien intrusion upon the festal night with its brute avouchment of horror and of death, seemed for a brief interval to fascinate him and hold him trembling where he stood.

With a noisy stroke of his staff upon the stone pavement, he turned his back upon the scene, and partially retracing his steps continued his journey toward Zion in altered course.

Ascending the street past the tower of Phasaelus, he reached the upper level of the city of David. For a single moment, as he stepped upon the terrace of the open square fronting the Roman pretorium, the one-time abode

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of the great Herod, he looked back upon the city below him, then across the Xystus and beyond Moriah, beyond the Temple, beyond the shadow of Olivet, and out into the blackness where lay the village of Bethany. It was only for an instant, and he moved on as resolutely as before.

Immediately to his left rose the walls of the ancient castle of the As-moneans. To-night the historic edifice, customarily silent and engloomed, was alive with voices and the tramp of sentries and with the sparkle of lights which flashed from its embrasures and deep-set windows. Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, had arrived on his annual visit from Tiberius, to be present in Jerusalem during the Passover. And as Judas walked on, following one of the tree-lined avenues that crossed the marbled plaza of the world-famed

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palace of Herod, he noted that it, too, this citadel of the Roman procurator, was illuminated and astir with unwonted activity; and he knew thereby that the hated Pontius Pilate was again present in the city, ready and eager to crush with the iron heel of despotism any sign of rebellion or disaffection against the sovereignty of Rome.

With an instinctive shrug Judas left the terrace, descending by a short flight of steps, and turned off to the right into a comparatively broad and well-paved street, where presently he came to a stop before the entrance of one of the larger buildings. A lantern overhanging the portal cast a sallow light upon the heavy, brass-covered gate; and raising his staff Judas made his presence known with three loud and impetuous knocks upon the resounding metal.

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A wicket in the upper portion of the gate swung open and the face of the keeper appeared within the closely barred aperture.

“Who stands without?” he demanded.

“Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.”

“What brings you here?”

“I would speak with Caiaphas, the high priest.”

“Begone then till the morrow at the fourth hour. ’Tis only then he holds audience with strangers.”

“No; I will see him now—at once! I am not a fool that I am come at this hour of the night! Open and let me enter, that I may prove to the captain of the guard my claim to speak with Caiaphas without delay.”

“It will serve you no purpose to enter. My lord the high priest may not be disturbed on any matter. He

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holds here to-night a special meeting of the high councilors of the Sanhedrin; a sitting of the house of justice."

"Aye, and it is therefore I am here! I have that to impart to Caiaphas which concerns deeply both himself and the chief priests and elders of the Sanhedrin."

"By the gods of Rome, these are big mouthings for a countryman! Who do you think you are, that you should be a bearer of wisdom to the Sanhedrin and the lord high priest of Israel?"

"A disciple of Jesus of Nazareth."

The keeper's face changed instantly to an expression of startled interest. "That Jesus who calls himself the Messiah?—that son of Belial who yesterday made mock of the high priest in the Temple?"

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“Yes.”

A bolt shot back and the gate slowly opened with a snarl of overburdened hinges. Retaining his hold upon the massive handle, the warder moved back with the gate as it swung inward and with a twist of his left thumb motioned Judas in.

“Enter and welcome, Judas of Kerioth,” and with a grim smile, as Judas entered, he closed and made fast the gate behind him. “Mayhap,” he commented with blunt insinuation, “my lord the high priest will be more ready to give you welcome than you had hoped for.” He made small effort to conceal the surprise and satisfaction with which he regarded the man he had admitted. “You bear for Caiaphas and the council a message from this Jesus of Nazareth? So be it. Remain

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here; I will summon the captain of the guard."

He stepped slowly backward as he spoke, his hand upon the hilt of his short sword, and disappeared through a low doorway into a faintly lighted corridor.

Judas held his peace. He had paid scant heed to his interlocutor and vouchsafed him no response. Such agitation as he manifested seemed altogether apart from his immediate situation. He had stood by in silent unconcern as the portal was closed upon him, and with a restless movement of his downcast eyes had parried unconsciously the keeper's scrutinizing stare. The outer court or vestibule in which he found himself was furnished with two or three heavy, leather-covered benches set against the walls.

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The warder had motioned to one of them as he left, but Judas disregarded the suggestion and remained standing.

With his face turned so as to avoid the direct light of the lamp which hung suspended by a brass chain from the center of the vaulted roof, he traced his frowning gaze in slow, aimless roving up and down the walls, the while tapping restlessly with his foot upon the floor. Several times he shifted his staff; holding it now between both his hands, and again grasping it single-handed in upright position; while ever and anon he bit savagely upon his under lip or cleared his throat with a quick, nervous cough.

An impulsive diversion of his thoughts seemed suddenly to arouse him. He appeared for the first time to realize his situation. He looked about him hurriedly, half-fearfully, in the

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grim silence of the place; noting with strained eyes the double-locked portal, and the barred exit at the opposite side of the court. There was no other exterior opening, save a small, grated window above the entrance. He listened intently. No sign of life came to him through the unfamiliar walls and shadows. Crouching, and with furtive step, he moved forward toward the doorway through which the keeper had taken his departure.

He had proceeded but a few feet when the sound of advancing steps echoed through the corridor. It was the breaking of the spell. The loneliness, the dread, the terror, that to a coward's heart lies ever threatening in the gloom of perfect silence, became instantly dissipated by this measured rending of the stillness—this evidence of material things. The fear that had

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come into his eyes paled quickly into cold indifference; and stepping back into the shadow he relapsed at once into his sullen, defiant mood.

The keeper reappeared, preceded by the captain of the guard, who at once approached and addressed himself to Judas:

“You bear a message to the high priest from Jesus of Nazareth?”

“No. But I would speak with Caia-phas concerning him.”

“You are a disciple of this Jesus?”

“I am.”

“You would plead for the high priest’s forgiveness of your master for his insult to the ruler of the Temple?”

“No! I am not come on an errand of supplication.”

“What matter then have you to lay before the high priest regarding this Jesus?”

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“Are you in the high priest’s stead, that I shall make communication to you?”

The officer, his face as stern and motionless as though sharing the immobility of the brazen helmet that encompassed it, turned abruptly on his heel. “Follow me!” he commanded, and strode across the floor to the doorway opposite the portal.

The keeper opened the door, and Judas, following the captain, passed out.

Crossing a narrow portico, he descended three or four steps and entered a spacious inner court. Though shut in on its four sides by the group of buildings constituting the palatial home of Caiaphas, it was open to the sky, and with its lawns and gardens and ornamental trees presented in miniature a scene of sylvan beauty and

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seclusion. A paved walk, circling the center fountain with its clusters of tall-plumed papyrus, and bordered on either side with flowering shrubs and sweet-scented bays, divided the court in the middle and led from the vestibule to the private apartments of the palace.

Exposed to the night, the courtyard itself was flooded with moonlight, and in the shadows of its surrounding galleries and porches the tinted glow of candelabra shone here and there through open windows and archways, conveying to the skulking eyes of Judas vague pictures of luxury and wealth. To his left, in a shaded angle of the court, he saw by the flare of kitchen fires the figures of guards and servants passing back and forth; and above the splash of the fountain and the distant notes of a harp, he caught an occasional word of command and the

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far-off cadence of a child's merry laughter.

Reaching the farther end of the court he followed his guide into a brilliantly lighted entrance hall, and passing an armed sentinel, mounted a flight of marble stairs and came upon a broad, open gallery overlooking the courtyard.

"You will remain here," commanded the captain, indicating with an imperative finger the confines of the gallery, and without further explanation passed at once through the heavily curtained archway that marked the entrance to the upper floor of the house.

For several minutes Judas paced back and forth across the tile-patterned floor of this upper porch, casting an occasional glance through its colonnade of Etruscan pillars into the underlying courtyard, or at the heavy bronze lantern that hung within the archway and

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whose rose-shaded flame revealed in flickering presentment the rich Damascene fabric of the portal draperies.

Then gradually he became aware of the near-by presence of voices. At first, intermittent and murmurous, as though borne on a passing current of air, he did not distinguish them from the varied sounds about him. But now their tones became more frequent, more noticeable, and gradually more distinct in their individualities. Here and there he imagined he caught a word, an exclamation. Finally, he stopped and listened. Out of the mumbled resonance of a deep-toned voice the name of "Jesus," uttered with an unmistakable inflection of contempt, came distinctly to his ear. He started, looked searchingly about him, and moved stealthily over to the entrance. Here he again stopped, and listened; then

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cautiously parted the curtains and peered within.

His reconnoiter showed him a softly lighted apartment, evidently designed to serve as an atrium or waiting room. It was not large, a single lamp sufficing to light it. Directly before him at the farther end, across the tessellated floor with its coverings of brilliant rugs, was a low doorway hung with tasselled arras of glittering brocade. These were tightly drawn; but with his hearing now alert and attuned and within closer range, they offered but little obstruction to the words that were being spoken within the room which lay concealed immediately beyond him.

He readily guessed that he was looking upon the entrance to the council chamber, and that the voices were those of members of the Sanhedrin who were met with Caiaphas in a sit-

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ting of the house of justice. In this he was at once confirmed, when, after a slight pause, the speaker he had just heard resumed his talk; and the words that now came to him in muffled yet coherent audibility told him that he had not been mistaken regarding the object of this special and hurriedly called meeting of the Sanhedrin's high council:

“Therefore, my fellow councilors, why do we hesitate? It needs no words of mine to convince you that this dreamer of dreams, this preacher of blasphemies, is deserving of death. He has spoken his own condemnation. Already we have tolerated too long his presence among us. Even now we waste time in discussion. Each of us in his mind is determined concerning this man. Then wherefore do we withhold our judgment? It is idle to pre-

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tend to the people that he is beneath our notice, or that in our official character we are ignorant of his works and of his teachings; and, believe me, my fellow councilors, it is worse than idle—it is cowardly, it is wrong—to pretend to ourselves that we are doing our duty by sitting thus in council against him, as we have done time and again during the past year, yet permitting on each occasion some ready pretext to thwart the consummation of our authority.

“Shall we confess to the people that we fear him? or shall we say to them that there is no longer meaning in the words that Moses spoke to our fathers regarding the punishment of blasphemers and false prophets? No, we shall do neither! The time is come for us to assert our authority; to defend the conscience and the law and the dig-

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nity of Israel! Let a guard with witnesses be sent at once, this very night, this very hour, to search out this doer of evil and lay hold upon him, and take him to the mount of Offence and there do unto him as demanded by the law: Let him be stoned!

“I speak bluntly, my brothers; nevertheless I but quote from the command of Moses:—‘So shall you put the evil away from the midst of you.’ It is he, speaking in the name of the Almighty Jehovah, who declares for us our duty; and as the sworn defenders of Israel’s faith it is for us to obey, and to obey at once! I have spoken.”

“Does not our worthy priest and fellow councilor speak in haste?” responded a voice, betokening in its softness and calm deliberation a man of patriarchal years. “If this Galilean preacher be guilty of the sins charged

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against him, let him be punished. No man is more zealous for the Law than I. But let us not forget that the law which ordains the putting to death of a false prophet, and of which our worthy priest, Joel Ben Simon, has just now so eloquently reminded us, also ordains that no man shall be condemned without a hearing in his own defence.”

Instantly the voice of another retorted derisively: “Is our venerable elder also of Galilee, that he would spare this prophet? Despite the blasphemies and the false teachings which we all have heard this man proclaim openly to his own condemnation, do you, our brother Nicodemus, think by bringing him before us, that we may perchance believe in him? Had not his own words already proved his falsehood and imposition, it were enough for us to know that he comes of the ac-

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cursed north. Search the Scriptures, my learned brother, and tell us wherein is recorded the name of a Galilean inspired of God. We know that in times past great miracles and strange have been wrought in the land of Israel. Perchance, for the sake of those who would have it so, such days may come again and there shall arise a prophet in Galilee."

"My brother, Ishmael Ben Phabi, has seen fit to misunderstand me," responded Nicodemus quietly; "therefore, it were idle to answer him. But lest he should think truly that God has despised the ancient land of Zebulun and that no prophet has yet arisen there, let me but remind him of Jonah and Hosea and Nahum. In the natural zeal of youth to ridicule the wisdom of old age, he has perchance forgotten

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that each of these God-chosen seers came out of Galilee.”

Ere he had finished speaking, several voices broke in upon him. The threatened disorder, however, was quickly overborne by a loud and incisive voice, which Judas at once recognized as that of Caiaphas:

“Peace! An end to this irrelevant contention!” he commanded sharply. “We are not met to-night to spend words in polemic wrangling; therefore, peace, my kinsmen and worthy rabbis. Think you by such means to give solution to the problem that presses upon us?

“Our brother priest, Joel Ben Simon, has said truly, that we waste time in speech; that the hour is come to act, to put forth our hands, on behalf of the safety and welfare of Israel. Yet

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at the same time has our respected elder, Nicodemus, spoken no less truly in counseling a due regard for the forms of the Law. As I said to you at the opening of the council, it behooves us to move quickly and decisively; yet must our judgment none the less be molded with extreme care and circumspection, keeping ever before our minds the consequences that may follow upon an ill-considered determination of this grave and momentous matter.

“Already I have said to you, my brothers—priests, elders and scribes of Israel,—that it avails nought for our purpose to determine in advance what this man may be: whether a false prophet or a blasphemer, a pretender to the Messianic throne or a mere political incendiary. Out of his own mouth and of any score of witnesses we shall con-

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vict him as we please when we shall have him before us. In itself it matters little what heresies he teaches, what claims he puts forward, what miracles he works. In due time would they prove their own emptiness, and by their self-evident falsity cast him out from among the people, even as time and again have others of his kind been repudiated and forgotten.

“It is not, therefore, that the faith of Israel is endangered by the preachings and the spectacular performances of this rude provincial; but, as I have already pointed out to you, the danger lies in his inciting the people to acts of treason or rebellion against the authority of Rome.

“The events of the past three days have made clear to you that this danger is not only real, but imminent. In two days is the Passover. You know

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that when on the first day of the week this Jesus of Nazareth came into the city he was hailed by the Galilean rabble as their king and Messiah. This outburst passed at the time as mere extravagance and rustic enthusiasm. The Roman officials gave no heed to it. But who shall say to what length these excitable and rebellious provincials may not venture on our feast day, the anniversary of Israel's deliverance?

“Well may we tremble for the safety of the nation at the prospect of any uprising, however weak or futile it may be. Its very attempt would be the signal for our certain destruction. Our Roman masters only await a pretext to annul what remains of our independence, or by fire and sword to scatter the remnants of God's people to the four winds of the earth.

“You know full well the temper of

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the man Pontius Pilate. You have not forgotten the unreasoning haste with which he slew certain Galileans, even while at their sacrifices, because of a mere rumor of disaffection. Nor can you blot from your memories the treacherous and wanton manner in which he sought to massacre the people of Jerusalem because they dared to raise their voices in protest against the robbery of the Temple for the building of Solomon's aqueduct. If such be his acts at the bare suggestion of revolt, it needs no eloquence of mine to point out to you the calamity that shall fall upon us if this Galilean fanatic be permitted to arouse his followers to some act of rebellion or lawless demonstration. We and the whole people shall suffer for it.

“Therefore, my kinsmen and fellow guardians of Israel, it is for us to see

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that such calamity shall not fall upon the nation because of the presence in our midst of this arrant and irresponsible agitator. Better is it that one man should die than that the whole nation perish. In his death alone lies the present salvation of Israel.

“Think not that I speak in the thought of the outrage and the gross indignity with which he dared profane our presence and authority in the Temple court, on the morning of yesterday. I am moved now wholly by solicitude and deep concern for the safety of our people; and there may be no rest for our fears and our conscience until we know that this man is safe within our hands. If his apprehension by our officers has heretofore been aborted lest it inspire a tumult among his followers, it is become now, with the passing of

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each hour, an ever more serious difficulty. He is surrounded always by a multitude while in the city, and at night he passes beyond our jurisdiction or is in hiding with his friends. And the Passover is scarce two days before us.

“Therefore, what wisdom shall guide us? How shall we lay hold upon this man before the Passover? That, my brother priests and worthy elders, is the problem before you. All else is determined: he shall die. But, answer me, my kinsmen—how shall we take him? how shall he be delivered up to judgment?”

A hush followed upon the words of the high priest. No one made answer. Instead, there arose a murmur as of subdued and hurried dialogue. With straining ears Judas sought to catch the inarticulate words and was about

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to venture nearer, when the voice of Caiaphas again became audible and held him at his place:

“So be it; let him be brought before us.”

In another moment Judas had redrawn the curtains, and was pacing slowly back and forth upon the outer gallery, when the captain of the guard reappeared and summoned him to come before the council.

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“You would speak with us concerning your master, Jesus Ben Joseph of Nazareth?”

The question was spoken by the high priest; his keen, glittering eyes meeting those of Judas in searching severity.

“Yes,” answered Judas, shifting his gaze uneasily about the long table at which were seated twenty or more

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members of the council; "yes, I would speak concerning my—concerning this Jesus of Nazareth."

"So be it; proceed!"

A score of unfriendly faces, some of them cold and contemptuous and others frowning with austerity, looked upon him in dead silence. He glanced furtively from one to the other of his magisterial auditors, recognizing none of them by person, yet readily distinguishing the priests from the elders and the scribes by their mitred head-dress and the general richness of their robes. At the head of the table, on a couch slightly more elevated than the others, sat the high priest; his bold, harsh features showing pale in the mingled lights of the candelabrum and the large brazen lamp with which the room was illuminated. Upon him Judas again rested his eyes.

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Twice he started as if to speak, but each time checked his tongue. His manner was not that of one held by fear or embarrassment. It was rather as though he were confused with hurried reasoning and sought to guard himself in his method of expression. However, it was but the hesitancy of a moment. With a flush of final decision he moved a step nearer and addressed himself bluntly to Caiaphas:

“What will you pay me,” he demanded, “if I deliver into your hands this Jesus of Nazareth?”

For an instant a tempering gleam of surprise shone in the cold, hard-set countenance of the high priest. “For what cause do you offer to betray your master?” he asked sharply.

“That I may serve Israel,” returned Judas.

There was a general stir about the

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table, as the councilors exchanged glances and bent forward to scrutinize more closely the man before them.

“That is well spoken, if it be spoken from the heart,” commented Caiaphas. “But how happens it that one of this man’s disciples is animated to speak in such manner as this?”

“Because my eyes have been opened. I have awaked to his false character. He is untrue to Israel; he would deliver up the nation to destruction. Of this I am assured, and I know whereof I speak. He may continue to deceive the Galileans; but I, the Lord be praised, am a son of Judah!”

“And now that you have grown of a sudden wise in your own conceit,” commented one of the elders whose voice Judas recognized as that of Nicodemus, “you would put your cunning to the service of Israel—for a consideration.”

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Judas acknowledged with an involuntary movement of his throat the taunt and suspicion conveyed in these calmly uttered words of the elder. Facing Nicodemus, he answered with a ready show of resentment, "If David, for recompense, delivered the Israelites of an evil, am I nobler than he that I should serve Israel in like manner without recompense?"

"Peace!" commanded Caiaphas. "Your loyalty to the nation shall not pass unrewarded. You agree to betray this man into our hands?"

"I do."

"Before the morning of the Passover?"

"Before the morning of the Passover."

"You will point out to us how and where he may be taken without knowledge of the people?"

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“I will.”

“So be it. And in return we covenant to pay you thirty shekels of the sanctuary. Are you agreed?”

“I am agreed.”

.

The outer gate swung shut with a clang, and Judas stole forth into the shadows of the night.

v

V

The day of unleavened bread was at hand. The morning with its intense bustle of preparation had gone. The shadows were already pointing eastward, the sixth hour had passed, and over all the land the work of the fields and the households had ceased. All trace of leaven, all uncleanness, all defilement had been purged from the habitations of the people. The unleavened bread had been baked, the bitter herbs gathered and prepared and the paschal lamb selected for the slaughter. Everything was in readiness for the Passover. Already in reverberating blasts the ram-horn trumpets had announced from the Temple the begin-

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ning of the feast. It had been the signal for the men of Israel to draw nigh and prepare for the sacrifice.

Pressing through the gates of the Temple, each with a lamb or a kid upon his shoulder, a joyous multitude of men filled to overflowing the vast enclosures of the sacred building. It was a wondrous, awe-inspiring congregation; a memorial assemblage of the heads of the families of Israel; a votive gathering of full two hundred thousand of the chosen men of God, bearing each his paschal offering of a spotless male.

Suddenly, from the court of the Priests, three trumpet blasts pierce the murmurous air, and upon the silence thus invoked there rises now a surging, outrolling chorus of five thousand voices—the choir of the Levites chanting the great Hallel:

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*“Praise ye Jehovah!
Praise, O ye servants of Jehovah,
Praise the name of Jehovah!”*

It is the signal for the slaughter of the Passover lambs. The ninth hour has arrived, and between this and the setting of the sun, a period of scarce three hours, must the whole multitude of animals be blest, slain and carried away for the eating of the paschal supper.

The vast concourse moves slowly forward in three well-ordered lines, reaching from the outer gates across the entire length of the court of the Gentiles, up the broad, marble stairs to the Beautiful Gate, through this world-famed portal with its jeweled portico and sculpturings of gold and Parian marble, into the court of the Women, across this anterior closure and up a

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further stairway of fifteen steps to the superlatively magnificent gate of Nicanor, with its titanic doors of Corinthian brass, more beautiful and more costly than finest gold and by their size and far-reaching height dwarfing the surgent stream of men to a swarm of insects, and through this engulfing gateway into the court of the Israelites, where the throng spreads out over its enormous space and halts before the walls of the court of the Priests.

A low parapet of white marble, its broad upper surface grooved with trough-like indentations, separates this priestly court from the encompassing court of the people; yet, being but waist high, permits an overlooking view of its interior; so that within it now may be plainly seen the congregated host of priests and Levites. Grouped in double rows and massed about the

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great altar in the center of the court, the entire priesthood of Jerusalem, in recognition of this supreme occasion of the year, is gathered together within sight of the people for the ministration of the national sacrifice.

Clothed in the vestments and the dignity of their consecrated office, they stand with covered heads and bared feet before the hosts of Israel; twenty thousand white-robed figures solemnly performing with the practised skill of rhythmic ceremony the seemingly impossible task before them; while from their midst comes ever the intoning of the deep-voiced Levites, never halting save at the prescribed intervals to await the hallelujah responses of the people. With bowls of silver and of gold these ministering servants of Jehovah catch the blood of the offerings, which, a thousand at a time, are now laid within

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the troughs of the dividing walls, and each hastily slain by its bearer with the aid of a priest; the blood being drained into the bowls and together with the entrails and certain portions of the flesh passed rapidly back from hand to hand, to be poured upon the altar and the waste portions cast into the enormous furnace that blazes beneath it.

As the time passes the formality of the proceedings becomes noticeably less observed. The need for haste grows urgent and imperative. There is a steadily increasing noise and confusion. The babeled voices of the men, breaking now into expressions of impatience, mingle with the incessant bleatings of affrighted animals. Despite the efforts of a legion of guards and officers and the closing of the gates, to stem the rush of the multitude, the crowding becomes well-nigh unendura-

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ble and beyond management. To the already stifling atmosphere are added the sickening odor of blood and the smoke of the altar fire with its fetor of burned flesh.

Each minute a thousand knives descend, a thousand lambs are slain, a thousand bowls of blood are dashed upon the altar, and a ton of reeking fuel added to the awful fire; and without a moment's halt, their robes and their hands splotched and running with crimson, the priests hold to their duties, with whipped nerves and with faces beaded with the intense heat that now pervades the court. And as though stirred by the emanations of the slaughter and the presence of the swaying and murmuring multitude, the Levites quicken the measure of their singing and raise their voices higher and still higher, imbuing the scene with

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a ferment of emotional excitement and religious hysteria, which rises among the people until their formal responses to the choir become outbursts of shouted and screaming hallelujahs.

Minute by minute the time passes quickly on. The hour draws near for the ending of the sacrifice. While tens of thousands have already passed out with their consecrated meat, there are yet other tens of thousands waiting their turn to reach the court of the Priests and now crying aloud in their impatience and discomfort. The efforts of the priests are redoubled. The crowds are becoming clamorous. Now twelve hundred, now fifteen hundred, and finally, in a perfect orgy of tumult and butchery, two thousand animals are blessed, killed and disemboweled within each minute of the hour's remaining fraction.

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No man is turned away without his sacrifice. Not one of the two hundred thousand yearlings goes forth alive. And the ending of the final moment witnesses the last of the worshipers trussing each the carcass of his lamb with a skewer of pomegranate wood and mumbling formal thanks to God. Then follows the choral benediction of the Levites, a thousand trumpets cry out upon the evening air, and the great paschal sacrifice is ended.

Among those to leave the Temple during the closing hour was one whose face was noteworthy above others because of its expression of uneasiness and evident anxiety. His rustic garb, his weather-roughed skin, and his heavy, hard-worn hands, together with a peculiar burr that manifested itself in the few words that he was occasionally obliged to return to a passing sal-

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utation, at once declared him a laborer from one of the provinces. A discriminating observer among his own countrymen would readily have distinguished him as a Galilean and would perhaps no less readily have detected that his calling was that of a fisherman. But among the thousands that now surrounded him, each intent upon his own errand, he passed unnoticed as a unit of the multitude.

The body of his lamb, wrapped in its skin, he held beneath his cloak. Not only was it thus protected from the dust, but his manner of carrying it suggested a desire to conceal its possession from the eyes of the public. With a throng of others he came out upon the street through one of the western gates of the Temple, and turned his steps northward toward the hill of Bezetha.

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He had not proceeded far when he was joined by another, a younger man, who had evidently been waiting for him; for as he, the younger man, emerged from the gateway in which he had been standing and met the other, he exclaimed impulsively, "The Lord be praised, Peter! I had begun to fear that some misfortune had fallen upon you."

"It is indeed growing late," returned the other; "but so far, John, all is well. It was impossible sooner to complete my errand. I should have reached the Temple earlier, that I might have been among the first. However, our task is now completed; except to carry the lamb to Johanan's house. You have arranged with him for the benches and for the water and the wine and the making ready of the oven?"

"I have," answered John. "Every-

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thing is in readiness. The bread and the endive have been left for Judas to purchase, and he will bring them with him."

"Johanan's neighbors—do they suspect who his guests are to be?" inquired Peter, after a momentary silence, as the two men threaded their way down one of the more secluded streets of Moriah.

"No," responded John; "he has spoken to no one. Furthermore, every man is too busy with his own preparations, and if the Master shall not come over until the night is grown toward the second watch, it is scarce likely he will be recognized or seen by any of the Temple officers. In truth, I am assured, Peter, that all will be well; that we need have no cause for anxiety."

"Let us pray that it may be so,"

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commented Peter solemnly. "Nevertheless, for my part, I say again that he is putting himself and all of us in danger by coming here to-night."

"Nay, Peter, you forget what the Master teaches us: that in our hearts there must be no thought of fear; that fear is of the world and not of the kingdom."

Peter was about to reply, when someone out of the moving and chattering crowd of the street stopped and accosted them: "The Lord be with you, brothers of Israel."

They looked up quickly, and showed by their momentary unresponsiveness that he who had spoken was a stranger to them. At the same time, however, his dress and bearing told them plainly that he was a Pharisee, and moreover a man of rank and accustomed wealth. His rich apparel, wide-bordered and

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heavily fringed, together with his phylacteries, bound with their soft-leather thongs upon his brow and left forearm, seemed but the natural complement of his proud and assured bearing; while in his gray-bearded dignity with its arresting yet indescribable expression of superiority lay the glamour of that exclusiveness which characterized the patrician members of his class. Stepping back within the angle of an adjacent wall, he beckoned the two men to draw near.

“Are you not disciples of Jesus of Nazareth?” he inquired, speaking in lowered voice and fixing his eyes upon Peter.

Peter’s face darkened with a scowl. “Before you stop to question those who are upon their lawful business,” he retorted angrily, “see to it, sir, that you mistake not who they are!”

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“Your anger is without warrant,” returned the Pharisee, in the calm reprimand of a superiorly trained temper. “I know you to be disciples of this Jesus. It will avail you nothing to deny it.”

“My friend meant not to deny it,” interposed the other; “but we are in haste.”

“Is your master in the city?” asked the Pharisee, pointedly ignoring the uneasiness of the two men and compelling them by his skilled attitude of authority to resist the impulse that urged them to avoid him and hurry on their way.

“No,” answered John; “he is not.”

“Does he plan to eat the Passover in the city to-night?”

“What is it to you,” demanded Peter, “where he is or what his plans may be? By whose authority and for what purpose do you meddle with us?”

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Without looking at Peter, the Pharisee quietly repeated his question to John: "Does your master plan to eat the Passover in the city?"

"Yes," answered the young man candidly, "he does. But at what time and in what part of the city, I shall not tell you."

"Nor do I care to know," responded the stranger calmly. "Depart in peace, men of Galilee, and fear not. The Lord be with you," and with a formal uplift of his jeweled hand he dismissed them.

He remained standing, looking after them until they disappeared beyond the archway that marked the turn in the street. Then, resuming his walk, he turned into one of the more busy thoroughfares and, unmindful of the looks and respectful salutations that greeted him amid the jostling populace, proceeded with unhurried steps down to

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the eastern gate of the city. Permitting himself here to be swept into and become a passive part of the boisterous stream of pilgrims that surged through the portal in turbulent eagerness to carry their paschal sacrifices to their tents outside the walls, he passed down to the valley of the Kidron and continued forward up the Mount of Olives.

He chose one of the bypaths leading to Bethany, and soon had passed beyond the camps of the pilgrims and away from the noise and the crowding of the people. Raising his eyes occasionally to glance ahead of him, he moved onward erectly with the measured gait of a dignity that disdained to compromise with the ruggedness and steepness of the pathway. He looked neither to the right nor the left, and accepted without acknowledgment

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the deference accorded him by the occasional villagers he met upon the path, each of whom instinctively stepped aside and with a bow or a furtive sneer allowed him the right of way.

The sun had set and the moon hung red upon the hazed horizon of the wilderness beyond Bethany, when he reached the village and inquired for the home of Lazarus, the ruler of the synagogue.

Entering by the gate that led into the garden beyond the house, he discerned amid the deep shadows of the foliage the figure of a man seated in an attitude of rapt thought upon the broad stone bench beside the olive tree. As he approached, the man looked up and without show of surprise quietly returned the other's inquisitive gaze.

The Pharisee seemed for a moment

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uncertain. "I would speak with Jesus of Nazareth," he announced, scrutinizing by the dim and unsatisfying light the face of the man before him.

"I am Jesus of Nazareth." In its quiet self-possession the voice gave echo to the evening calmness.

"It is well," returned the Pharisee promptly, "and may peace be with you." Then moving a step nearer he added, "Perchance you do not recognize me. Know, then, that I am Joseph of Arimathea, a councilor of the Sanhedrin."

Jesus raised his eyes with an expression of appreciative interest. "The blessings of the Lord be upon you, Rabbi Joseph," he answered in kindly welcome. "If it is I with whom you would speak, share with me the seat upon this stone."

The councilor slowly seated himself.

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He did not speak at once, but permitted a full minute to pass in silence. The unaffected calmness and familiarity with which Jesus had received him, a reception so singularly out of keeping with that to which he was accustomed from his official inferiors, apparently caused him to deliberate in what manner to proceed.

The dusk of the garden obliterated almost wholly the distinguishing differences in the dress and physiognomy of the two men. The rich silks and Egyptian linen of the Pharisee, with their embroideries and jeweled decorations, blended into oneness of appearance with the plain woolen garments of the Nazarene. And if the one held himself with the studied dignity of rank, the poise of the other was that of the unconscious dignity of commanding character. Something of the spir-

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it of this equality which thus the leveling touch of eventide revealed to him seemed to give direction to the councilor's procedure; for when he again addressed the Galilean it was with a marked diminution of his attitudinal loftiness.

"You are perchance surprised that one of my position should thus seek you out," he began in a tone of formal civility.

"Not if you have come to learn of me regarding the Truth," returned Jesus. "In the sight of the Father no man is of rank above another. Moreover, it has not remained for you to be the first among the judges of Israel to come thus to me under cover of the night. Ask of your fellow-councilor Nicodemus."

"It is due to him, and moreover it is partly at his behest, that I am

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now here," responded the Pharisee. "Through him have I learned of the true character of your teachings, and it rejoices me that they are in spirit those of my revered master, Hillel, at whose feet I sat when a youth. I am a man now ripe in the wisdom of years, and I say to you as a follower of this great teacher, that the nation has need of you. The people are more ready now to hearken to his exalted teachings, and upon you, honored of God with the mantle fallen from the shoulders of the master, rests the glorious work of hastening forward the preparation of Israel for the kingdom of God."

Jesus put forward his hand in a gesture of interruption. "Let not your thoughts be deceived," he said earnestly. "That which is given to me to speak is not by the authority of men,

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but is of the Father and Him only. I teach neither as a disciple of Hillel nor of Moses, nor yet of any of the scribes or prophets that have gone before. Each was sufficient unto his own generation. My words are of the Spirit; that alone is my guide. No man in whom is the Spirit has need of earthly teachers.”

“It is but meet that you should thus interpret the power that God has given you,” returned the Pharisee in patronizing acquiescence. “Yet none the less I am convinced that you are ordained to carry forward the good work of Rabbi Hillel. Like him, you are of the people. You know them and understand them, and you have enlisted their hearts. And I repeat, that from what I have myself observed and from what my brother-elder, Nicodemus, has recounted to me, I am assured your

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teachings are for the good of Israel. Israel has need of such as you. There abounds in you the spirit of the prophets. No man could speak as you speak or do the things that you do, except he be inspired of God.

“Verily, I say to you, Jesus of Nazareth, that God has appointed you to preach the coming of the kingdom. In this judgment Nicodemus and I stand alone among the councilors and the Pharisees; yet it is because we alone have read the signs and discerned the truth concerning you. Like the servant of Elijah have we looked from the mountain top and beheld the little cloud arising out of the sea.

“That which in the fulness of years I now know for a verity, did I first hear from the lips of Hillel himself: that the preparation of the people must come from within, through peace,

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through non-resistance, through right thinking. It is thus you teach the people, and they are ready to listen to you and follow you. Therefore, as a young man, received and acclaimed at the very outset of your career, there lies before you a future glorified with the promise of great things.

“However, the time is not yet propitious for such as I to openly espouse your cause. ‘For everything there is a season: a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.’ The people themselves, even your own chosen disciples, do not rightly understand your purpose. And it is to be deplored that you should permit such outbursts of tumult and false acclamations as have recently attended your presence in the city. Such demonstrations, however gratifying to you, cannot but becloud your teachings and result in grave danger, not alone to

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yourself, but to the entire nation as well.

“In truth, this unfortunate result has already been produced, and it is because of this that I am come thus out of season to speak with you. By so doing am I transcending the bounds and the dignity of my office and the judgment of my colleagues; for as a counselor of the nation I may not acknowledge you until such time as you shall have established yourself and shall have convinced the authorities through a stricter control of the people and a more formal presentation of your teachings, that you are worthy the title of Rabbi. Nevertheless, am I constrained, as one who would serve Jehovah before man, to give to you of my assistance and advice, lest your work be ‘as water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again.’ ”

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He paused in invitation for response and met complacently the earnest gaze which the Nazarene turned upon him. Jesus spoke his answer slowly, and in his words there trembled a note of compassion, a fleeting, unconscious revelation of the God-given superiority of the one man above the other: "Believe me, Rabbi Joseph, when I say to you that I am not unmindful of your esteem and the well meaning of your purpose; but let this knowledge come to you and remain with you: that he whose trust is in the Father has no need of any man's judgment or guidance."

"You speak without knowledge," retorted the Pharisee. "Never had man greater need of his brother's guidance than have you in this hour. Listen: You are prepared to go to Jerusalem to-night, to eat the Passover. You

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know that in so doing you are in danger of arrest by the officers of the Sanhedrin, but you think by the exercise of caution to avoid them. Now, I say to you, remain here. If you value your life and would fulfill the work God has assigned to you, do not enter Jerusalem to-night. You have shown much wisdom in remaining away during the past two days. Continue in your wisdom, and go not into the city again until after the Passover. Then will the excitement and the danger have passed and you shall be free to preach again among the people.

“With the Psalmist can I declare, that ‘I have been young and am now old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.’ And now, therefore, am I an instrument in the hand of the Lord, to warn you and protect you. I speak not upon opinion; but I say to you with

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the authority of assured knowledge, that, despite whatever measures you may have thought to take, you will be seized and put to death if you venture to eat the Passover in Jerusalem to-night.

“In thus speaking to you I forget that I am a member of the council, which has condemned you and which is seeking to destroy you; for I am come to you as a man to his neighbor in time of trouble. Verily, I say to you, Jesus of Nazareth, that although I be numbered among those who revile you and persecute you, yet is it more tolerable in the sight of righteousness to remain thus in secret one of your disciples, than to be him among your acknowledged friends who has bargained to betray you! Yes, be not incredulous. I speak the truth: One of your twelve chosen disciples stands

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ready this night to deliver you into the hands of Caiaphas!

“But enough. Already have I compromised too far the exactions of my oath as a judge of Israel. Nevertheless, it has been in the service of God, and He will not hold censurable that which is done for the prospering of the kingdom. Albeit, you will reveal to no man what I have spoken to you; nor is there need that anyone should learn of my presence here. I have hazarded much, that you might be spared to Israel. Therefore, let not my word return unto me void: Remain here; enter not into Jerusalem to-night. I have spoken. The Lord bless you and keep you.”

He rose while reciting his valediction, and without further ceremony turned and walked proudly out of the garden.

VI

“Master, your friends await you at the gate.”

Jesus had already entered the court from the garden when Mary, on her way to call him, met him and spoke to him.

“Yes,” he answered vaguely, as one aroused from abstraction—“yes, I have been expecting them. It must be more than midway of the first watch, and the time is come for the eating of the Passover.” He halted as he spoke and looked out across the tree tops at the now full-risen moon.

“There is yet ample time,” responded Mary. “Lazarus has only now gone over to our neighbor Simon’s

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house, to assist him in presiding at the meal.”

“Does Simon look for me to eat the Passover at his house?”

“Yes, Master; so I understood Lazarus to say.”

Jesus bent his gaze upon Mary, who stood facing him with her head gracefully inclined in customary attitude of womanly respect and her hands folded limply before her. “Lazarus, then, does not know that I have arranged to eat the Passover with my disciples in Jerusalem?”

Mary started and raised her eyes impulsively to his. “No, Master, he surely has no thought of this! and must it indeed be so? Is it not better that you should eat to-night with Lazarus and our neighbors? Your friends who are now here, could they not carry

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word to the others that you will remain in Bethany?"

The argument and suggestion involved in her hastily spoken query were but the spontaneous promptings of an anxious heart; an artless effort to proffer the guidance of her instinct, without defying the strict canons of her sex against the offering of council or opinion.

Jesus apparently gave no heed to her questioning. Absently, as if in meditation, he reverted to her previous words: "Lazarus, you say, expects me to eat with him and the neighbors at Simon's house? They have prepared a place for me at the table?"

"Yes, Master; and even were it not so, neighbor Simon's door stands open to you. You know that next to ourselves there is no one other than he

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who is at all times so ready to receive you, and that none, dear Master, would be a more welcome guest at his table to-night than you." As she spoke, her face lighted with a smile—a radiant expression of hope and relief,—and in that instant there shone within her eyes the rapturing light of ardent womanhood, a momentary glimpse of the unshrouded feminine in the full purity of its sacredness and impelling fascination.

Jesus put forth his hand as though to touch her. For an instant it hovered near; vibrant, eloquent with yearning; then slowly and unsteadily he allowed it to fall again to his side. He did not speak. Only in the tensility of his silence did he give utterance to a heart strained and throbbing with emotion.

"Rabbi," called a voice from the

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shadows; and a moment later the figure of a man followed by two others approached the recess of the court in which Jesus stood. "We thought to look for you, Master, fearing you had perchance forgotten that we were waiting for you," explained the spokesman, as he and his companions drew near. "It is growing late, and if we are to eat the Passover in the city, should we not be on our way? By this time the others have already joined Peter and John at Johanan's house, and will be anxious if we longer delay."

Jesus inclined his eyes once more to Mary, who, instinctively responsive to the duty of maidenhood in the presence of men, stood now again with clasped hands, retiring and submissively silent. "Yes, Andrew," he answered, "the time is come for our departure," and as he spoke he slowly faced his friends

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and stepped forward to join them. "I meant not to have worried you by delaying. It was good of you, Andrew, and of you, James and Thomas, to remain and wait for me. Come, we will tarry no longer; only I ask that you will go with me by way of Simon's house, that I may let him know I will not eat with him to-night."

As his companions started forward he turned to Mary. A sudden gleam trembled upon her pendent lashes and illumined with meaning the childlike quiver of her lip. "Master!"—It was a whispered, involuntary cry of entreaty, an unintentioned baring of her soul; and in the immediate consciousness of shame and impotent womanhood she averted her face and said no more. And as Jesus spoke to her she responsively folded her hands as one

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who prays, and fixed her unseeing eyes upon the night's infinitude.

“The Lord bless you, Mary, and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” He bent over and pressed his lips gently upon her brow. “Farewell. God be with you.”

The footsteps of the four men passed out of hearing. Only the mournful rustle of the trees and the trickle of the courtyard fountain greeted her listening ear. About her was the stillness of peace. Silence. The overruling silence of the night—*this* night; the self-same silence that had lain upon the hearts of Egypt awaiting in the darkness the coming of the angel.

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The Passover! Not until this hour had she given it interpretation. And now, in the sudden presence of its spirit, her soul gazed trembling with strange affrightment upon its allusive mystery of sacrifice and of salvation through death.

“Mary!” It was the voice of Martha calling from the house.

“Yes, sister, I am coming,” and with her arms folded in her mantle she crossed the court and found Martha awaiting her at the door.

“Where have you been, Mary?” she demanded querulously. “Have you forgotten that we are to go to Simon’s house to-night?”

“Is there need, sister, that we should go?” returned Mary.

“No, I suppose not; only we had so planned, and I thought it was your especial wish to go.”

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“Now that the time has come, sister, I would rather that we remain at home, unless it should please you to do otherwise.”

“No; I am myself quite content not to go. We are not truly needed, for there will be a company of others to assist in the serving of the meal, and, as you know, I am one of those who believe that as women may not partake of the feast it is more becoming that they be not present unless they can be of service. Moreover, we are both of us worn with the day's preparations and it is better that we should rest and sleep.”

She stepped back through the doorway as she spoke, and together the two sisters entered the house. The door led directly into the low, square room that served as the general living apartment; its furniture and conveniences

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indicating at once a condition of domestic welfare above that of the average village family. A terra-cotta lamp, set upon a shelf in the wall, burned blue with lowered flame. Martha reached up and with quick, deft fingers raised and trimmed its sputtering wick.

“Rabbi Jesus was late in leaving for Simon’s house,” she remarked in casual comment, as she readjusted the brightened lamp.

“The Master did not go to our neighbor’s,” answered Mary. “He is on his way to Jerusalem. He will eat the Passover there, with his disciples.”

Martha faced about with a shrug of impatient surprise. “Did he not know,” she asked, “that Lazarus and Simon expected him?”

“No, sister, not until it was too late. Lazarus, no doubt, thought he had spoken to him about it, but he could not

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have done so. We ourselves should have mentioned it to him."

"No," retorted Martha; "it is not for women to meddle in the affairs of men! Moreover, notwithstanding that the Master has remained here as our guest during the past two days, we have scarcely seen him. The opportunity was not ours had we been so inclined. Not more than twice has he sat with us at table during these two days."

"Yes, sister; but is it not because he was troubled and would be alone? Should we not be comforted that he finds here the seclusion and freedom from intercourse that his burdened heart desires? Surely, it is not only I who see that he is suffering and in sorrow! You, sister, and everyone who loves him and cares for him cannot but feel how deeply wounding must be to him the thought that he may not

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venture into the city because of the faithlessness of the people; that he is become an outcast, in actual danger of harm, when all his thoughts, all his words are of love and of peace and of the glory of the kingdom.

“O sister, does not your heart ache for him! And yet how utterly helpless and without power are we to comfort him or shield him. If only we could have spoken in time to prevent his going to Jerusalem to-night. This much we might indeed have done had we but known. Surely, he ought not to have gone. Of all times, we should this night have kept him with us. Only yesterday did Lazarus tell us of what he had heard concerning the anger of the high priest and of the spies he has set throughout the city.”

As Mary spoke she anxiously watched her sister's face, and now, clasping her

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arm, she exclaimed, "Nay, Martha, you cannot hide it from me! You, too, believe that he is in danger; that it is unsafe for him to be in Jerusalem to-night! Nay, more, you feel that some calamity is impending; that his life is in peril! It was wrong for me not to have spoken to him and urged him to stay! Tell me, sister, is it yet too late? Can I not go and speak to Lazarus, that he may call the Master back?"

Martha laid a calming hand on Mary's shoulder. "No," she said firmly, "such talk is without reason. Rabbi Jesus is master of his own acts. It is not for you or even for Lazarus to presume to interfere with what he has done. Moreover, I have no such fear concerning him as your frightened fancy has aroused in you. He knows better than you or I what dangers beset him, and if he has chosen to go to

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Jerusalem with his friends to-night we may rest content that he has assured himself of his comfort and safety. I confess I am surprised that he should have gone, when he must know that he could have eaten the supper with Simon or any other host of Bethany. But it is not for me, a woman, to question the acts of a rabbi; and you, Mary, should learn better to control your heart and your mind concerning the Master.

“It is not seemly for a maiden so readily to yield for a man her sympathy and solicitude, for it is not given to her to understand his nature or the problems that beset him. And, moreover, even thus to discuss the Master between ourselves is wholly without profit, since it lies not with us by one hair’s breadth to shape his pathway. Let us, therefore, to-night talk no more about him, but seek our couches in the meek

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and humbling remembrance that Jehovah—and not you or I—is the keeper of his safety and his welfare.”

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Mary awoke with a start. Distinctly she had heard her name called, once and then again, out of the slumbering depths of the night. She turned instinctively, with a half-uttered inquiring response, toward her sister's couch. Martha lay sleeping beside her, breathing with the fulness of restful slumber. She did not return even an answering stir when Mary put her hand upon her and spoke to her; and in the deep isolation of her unconsciousness she seemed but to heighten and give embodiment to the eerie loneliness of the room that chilled the startled and groping senses of the awakened sister.

With quickened ear, attuned to a vivid remembrance of the call that had

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aroused her, Mary listened, half raised upon her elbow, for a repetition of the voice; for some directing or explaining sound amid the rigid silence of the uncertain hour. The room was as a grave in its stillness. The light of the moon streamed in through its one small window, making visible each object within its narrow space. It revealed no living presence other than her sister and herself; nor did the night without, by faintest sign, give evidence of movent life, beyond the tristful wandering of the breeze amid the foliate garden.

Doubtingly and unsatisfied she sank back upon her pillow. If she had but dreamed, whence came the dream? What message lay within its wakening call? Or was it but the childish outcry of her own afflicted heart, enchimed with His in dreams of dread forebod-

An Interpretation

ing? She offered no solution to her questionings. They came and passed as troubled fancies. Weary of body, weary of mind, she drifted in restless thought and perplexity, until gradually her form relaxed and her drooping eyes fell shut in dreamful doze.

But scarcely had she drawn the first deep breath of sleep when with a suffocating cry of fear she sprang upright upon her couch: "*Judas!*" As one entranced she sat in rigid terror, staring at the visioned face before her—a face besmeared with blood and twitching with a leer of murderous passion. And as it slowly passed away before the dawning of her conscious sight, there came again the gentle voice from out the darkness, calling "Mary; Mary."

She waited not again to doubt the prompting of her fears. Why had she

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not responded at once? Why had she questioned? Had not the spirit within already interpreted aright? Full-roused and tense with resolution, she sprang from her bed. Her garments hung close to hand upon the wall. As one impelled to flight, she clad herself hastily in her outer cloak and her sandals. She did not stop to bind her hair with its scarf. Her mantle thrown over her head and fastened closely at the throat sufficed to conceal it. She was in haste; she dared not tarry; she must go! With quick and noiseless tread, as she clasped her girdle about her, she crossed the room and unfastened the door. .

For an instant she turned and looked at the sleeping form of Martha. Surely, she must wake her and tell her; she dared not do this thing without her sanction. But what had she to tell?

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How could she explain? Martha would not understand. She herself did not understand. She only knew with the certainty of inspired terror, that the Master was in danger; that she must fly to him and warn him. All else was oblivion. Reason, duty, honor, pride, obedience—all were stilled in the storm of the overpowering conscience that possessed her soul. Again, in shuddering recollection, as she hesitated upon the threshold, the face of Judas rose before her in the full horror of its portent, softened only by the heavened voice of the Master still sounding in her ears in plaintive urgency.

Closing the door softly behind her, she passed out into the night.

Mechanically she drew the hood of her mantle about her face and with her arms wrapped within her cloak she hurried forward through the garden and

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out of its gate into a byway leading steeply to the mountain path. The sound of laughter and singing came to her from the village streets, announcing the conclusion of paschal suppers and the breaking up of the companies. Was she then too late? had she heeded too tardily the warning of her dreams? Only thus did the circumstance of her flight disturb her fevered thoughts. It brought to her no realizing sense of the impropriety, the shame, the danger, that must attend the lone presence of a woman upon the streets or public road at this hour of the night. She cared for nothing, was conscious of nothing, beyond the one impelling purpose of her being—to reach the Master. She recked not how she could find him, where to look for him, what means lay with her to shield him or guide him. She realized only that she

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must go to him. The spirit that had called her would direct her and make clear to her whatever lay before her to do.

Breathless with rapid walking, she reached the summit of the mount, and in the relaxation of descent allowed her steps to hurry her forward even more rapidly over the second half of her course. The bright moonlight, together with her guidant sense of direction, enabled her without trouble to follow the winding path, and unresponsive to the peril that lurked in the possible concealment of vagrants and camp stragglers within the shadows and secluded orchards that lay upon her way, she hastened fearlessly onward down the slope.

Although she passed close to some of the pilgrim camps and caught here and there a darkened glimpse

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of men and women moving about among the tents, it was not until she approached the gate and entered the city itself that she encountered the presence of others upon her way. At first singly, and then in scattered companies as she turned into the street which she knew would take her toward Bezetha, they increased in numbers about her; oftentimes confusing her sight with the lanterns and torches which many of them carried for the lighting of their path.

They were all of them men, returning homeward from the celebration of the Passover. As she passed them by not one among them failed to turn or stop to look upon her. There were those who called to her and others who sought to touch her and detain her. Yet each of them on second glance became aware of his mistake. Though

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she neither spoke nor gave sign of resentment or alarm, there was that in her bodily expression of innocence, in her breathless, eager, almost passionate haste, which disarmed at once all brutal thought and aroused instead a rough compassion for her—a woman stressed beyond the fear of men with some unto-ward anxiety.

Becoming with each encounter more fully sensible of her situation, but driven onward by the unabated urgency of her spirit, she drew her mantle yet more closely about her and pressed on with increasing hurry, unmindful of her weariness and the rapid beating of her heart. The house of Johanan on Bezetha! Through a recollection of the words spoken by Andrew, this alone was her guide amid a tanglement of directions in a neighborhood of the city completely unfamiliar to her. Follow-

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ing blindly a crooked, upleading street, she ascended the mount, tensively alert for some familiar voice amid the groups of men that passed her, and glancing eagerly into each lighted window that shone upon her way.

But was she not thus permitting herself to depend wholly upon chance? Must she not determine where to seek Johanan's house? Involuntarily, with all the innate pride and fear of virtuous womanhood, she shrank from addressing a stranger in public. Yet if she had thus far, by her unprivileged presence on the streets, imperiled her honor and her safety in her desire to aid the Master, should she now scruple at this—the possible exposure of her identity, the possible sacrifice of her good name?

She found herself at a branching of the street, irresolute which way to go.

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Suddenly, the dark figure of a man appeared within the court in which she stood and came rapidly toward her. As he approached she boldly raised her head to address him. At sight of her he stopped abruptly, and as he did so the light of the moon fell full upon his face.

“*Judas!*” Her cry was the pained and terrored outburst of one who had been struck. With uplifted arms shielding her face she crouched back, away from him, in dread abhorrence and consternation.

Himself pale and startled with astonishment, he stared at the shuddering figure before him. “In the name of God, who are you!” he exclaimed in dazed incredulity. He reached out impetuously and grasped her arm. “Nay, seek not to hide your face! I know of a truth it is you, Mary; but

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what does this mean! Why are you here—in this place—at this hour—and alone? Answer me! What does it mean?”

For answer she threw off his hold upon her arm with unexpected vehemence and turned upon him a countenance regnant with sudden determination and defiance. “Where is the Master?” she demanded.

“He is still at the supper,” returned Judas, surprised into unequivocal response at her peremptory question.

“Then why are you not with him?” she went on. “Why are you thus hurrying away toward the city?—No, do not speak to me! Withhold your answer. Think not to deceive me. Already do I know. I have not been led without reason. You would harm the Master!—you would betray him!—you are bent upon some evil toward him!”

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Judas started and clenched his hands. "Enough of this babbling speech!" he interrupted excitedly. "Tell me what this means! What madness has brought you here? For what purpose are you come? Whom do you seek?"

"I seek the Master. Tell me where is Johanan's house. Nay, speak no word to me! Leave me; go your way! I shall ask of these men approaching where I may find him."

"A truce to this unreasoning and shameless talk!" commanded Judas, speaking hastily and with the harshness of angry alarm. "Defile your own name if it so please you, but bring not ridicule and dishonor upon Rabbi Jesus by inquiring for him of strange men upon the streets of Jerusalem at midnight! Peace, Mary! I say to you, peace! You talk as one possessed of a demon. Verily, some evil spirit is

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within you and has driven you to this amazing pass, that you are come to the city, alone, on the Passover night, to warn the Master against one of his own disciples!

“You are mad; you are but dreaming; you know not what you say or do! Who has spoken to you—what have you heard, that you are so ready to accuse me of evil motives? Aye, you dare not answer me—you cannot; you have heard nothing, you know nothing, to justify your foul suspicion. It is but your own ill-minded fancy, your own false, distrustful heart, which is ever ready to scorn me and defame me! Have I charged you with unholy motives because I find you here upon the streets? Of a truth, you shall have much to answer for should this become known. As for myself, I have nought to conceal, nought to be

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ashamed of. Although it is not for a man to explain to a woman, nevertheless will I tell you that I am upon an errand for the Master to a friend in the neighborhood. If you do not believe me, if you will see no good in me, come back with me to the house and the Master himself shall tell you I speak the truth."

He faced partially about, as if to retrace his steps. Mary did not offer to follow him, nor did she make any comment upon his words. The tense, determined poise of her figure had given way to an attitude of irresolution; and as Judas turned again toward her and continued speaking, she slowly bowed her head and stood before him constrained and unresponsive.

"No, you dare not go back with me!" he taunted. "What words of mine or yours would suffice to explain to the

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Master and our company the meaning of your presence here—your desire to come among them? You would bring them warning? Against what?—against whom? Yet even were it true that danger threatened, when has it been given to a maiden to wander forth in the city at midnight to be a bearer of news unto men? Nay, you have no defense, except only that you would save Rabbi Jesus from the evil of your own shameless imaginings! You would dishonor your brother and your sister, you would imperil your name, your virtue, your life, that you might perchance win the gratitude of Jesus! For what other man would you do this thing?—for Gamaliel—for me? Bah, woman! I say unto you—”

He raised his hand in an attitude of menace, his voice a-tremble with passion and his eyes blazing with envenomed

An Interpretation

rage. But he did not proceed. He held himself with nervous effort, and as Mary lifted her eyes in startled apprehension he let fall his hand and covered his perturbation with an affected cough.

Before he could again speak, Mary stepped toward him precipitately. "Nay, Judas, I *will* see the Master!" she exclaimed, in sudden recrudescence of her purpose. "I am not deceived—your voice belies you: You hate the Master! My spirit has not spoken to me in vain; God has not led me thus far for no purpose. I care not for your taunts and your threats! You *shall* lead me to Johanan's house!"

But as Judas, in ready acceptance of her challenge, started forward, she hesitated and drew back, again overcome with a realization of her dilemma. "No, I shall wait for him here," she declared, her voice high-strung and

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almost vehement with hysterical indecision. "He must pass this way, even as you have done. Go upon your errand! Leave me! Leave me to myself!"

"Nay, Mary, I dare not leave you," protested Judas. His voice had become calm and he spoke with insinuating friendliness. "I meant not to have said what I did. I am but overwrought at finding you thus and at your unthinking readiness to bring suspicion and reproach upon the Master; and in my temper and agitation at thought of your rashness I have spoken hastily and without consideration. Were I not truly concerned because of you I might readily have gone my way and left you to the evil of your reckless purpose. Therefore, believe me, Mary, that despite your contempt and evil thought of me, I am not unmindful of my duty

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toward you. I bear you no ill will for thinking to accuse me of treachery toward Rabbi Jesus. Your own reason tells you it is false; for, did I bear him malice, would I have sat with him at the paschal supper, and would I now be upon an errand for him, at hazard of arrest, if I were aught but a faithful friend and disciple?

“Banish, therefore, from your mind the accursed hallucination that is upon you, and hasten home ere some calamity befall you or you are again minded to stultify the Master in the eyes of men by seeking for him thus in public as a wanton of the streets. Tarry not a moment longer! Return at once to Bethany, and pray the Lord that no other man but me has recognized you; for, truly, a man in my place would need but open his mouth in gossip, to make of you forever an outcast among

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the people. Therefore, if you would have me hold inviolate the knowledge which is mine, do as I bid you: Go; leave the city at once, and let haste and vigilance guide you homeward. See that you speak to no man; and may the Lord keep you and protect you.”

He did not wait to satisfy himself of her response; but with a tactful show of confidence in the power of his words he walked deliberately away and soon disappeared beyond the building that abutted upon the turn of the street.

Apparently dazed and without volition, Mary stood listening to his footfalls—subdued, vulpine, almost noiseless footfalls upon the silence of the darkened streets. Not until they died away did she move. Then, in sudden, fevered haste she caught up her cloak, raising it just free of the ground and catching it loosely in her

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girdle, and a moment later, after an anxious look ahead, was speeding down the hill toward the city gate with the nervous, frightened breathing of one pursued.

The ascending path of Olivet made her first aware of her spent strength. Only then, in the enforced realization that she was now beyond the city, beyond the Kidron, beyond the menace of discovery, did she slacken her speed and seek relief from the exhaustive panting of her heart. Spurred by the reactive consciousness of her predicament, her rashness, her peril, her unwarranted and beshaming conduct, she had fled homeward, down through the tortuous streets and out of the gate, knowing not how she had avoided misadventure, save only that Heaven had guided her and shielded her, in answer to her throbbing prayer that she might

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regain her couch unrecognized and without her sister's knowledge of her absence.

But with the spending of her strength and first impetuous trepidation, there returned to her again with gnawing insistence the impulse of the spirit that had led her forth. Had she indeed been true to her conscience and true to the Master, in thus turning back? in submitting so readily to the plausible words of Judas? Yea, of a surety, she had had no alternative. Had not Judas indeed spoken the truth, that she was but jeopardizing her own and the Master's welfare? Yet withal her soul was not satisfied nor at rest. Again the dread fear seized upon it, clutching and convulsing it with the chill blackness of impending evil.

Slowly and yet more slowly her feet

An Interpretation

dragged onward up the mountain.

To the left of her, at some little distance, lay the clustered shadows of an orchard. She stopped and looked wistfully toward it. It was the one place familiar to her amid the many that lay grouped about her in shadowed and illusory outline—Gethsemane. Quiet, peaceful, restful with the solemnity and holy mystery of night, it spoke to her of the Master. It was here he was wont to rest and at times to spend the night in the solitude of its seclusion. Yea, would he not perchance stop here to-night upon his return from Jerusalem? Should she not, therefore, tarry and wait near, if but to keep vigil in prayer for his protection—if but to see him from afar and assuage her troubled soul with assurance of his safety?

VII

VII

*“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,
But unto Thy name give glory,
For Thy mercy and for Thy truth’s
sake.”*

The chanting of a solitary voice breathed upon the midnight silence. The sound came from the window of the upper room of a house in Jerusalem, near the city’s eastern wall. It was the voice of a man; low, yet clear and of almost womanly softness, and modulated with a tenderness that tuned the measured psalm with melody.

And as the solo ceased it was answered by a chorus of men’s voices:

“Praise ye the Lord.”

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Any passerby upon the street would at once have recognized the hymn as the great Hallelujah of the Passover. It would have told him that within this house the paschal supper, which that night had been eaten in every home in Jerusalem, was only now coming to a close. The singing of the familiar psalms that constituted the second part of the great festal hymn, marked the conclusion of the meal and of the simple ritual that accompanied it. The sacrificial lamb had been eaten, together with the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread, the cup of diluted wine had been passed about for the last time with the benedictions of the host, and now the company, standing grouped about the table in readiness to depart, was returning thanks and praise to God in the inspiring words of David:

An Interpretation

*“Oh, praise the Lord, all ye nations.
Praise him, all ye people.*

*For His merciful kindness is great
toward us,*

*And the truth of the Lord endureth
forever.*

“Praise ye the Lord.”

The verses were chanted slowly; sometimes the one sweet, dominating voice singing alone and the others responding, or again the full company joining together in rhythmical unison. The voices were low and oftentimes faltering. They did not breathe the customary festal spirit. They were subdued as with a burden of thought and feeling. Floating out into the darkness, the soft-intoned psalmody rose scarce above a murmur; yet in the silence that now brooded upon the city the words fell upon the ears of belated

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pilgrims with a distinctness and with an inspiration and a wonder of meaning that lay beyond the giving of any choir whose Hallelujah had that night risen to heaven in full-toned jubilation.

*“All nations compassed me about;
Yea, they compassed me about;
But in the name of the Lord will I
conquer them.*

*The Lord is my strength and my
song,*

‘And is become my salvation.

I shall not die, but live,

And declare the works of the Lord.

The Lord hath chastened me sorely;

*But He hath not given me over unto
death.*

*I will praise Thee, for Thou hast
heard me,*

‘And art become my salvation.

*Blessed be he that cometh in the name
of the Lord.*

An Interpretation

*“In the name of the Lord, Hallelu-
jah!*

Praise ye the Lord!”

The singing ceased. There followed the sound of a voice in prayer; and the paschal meeting was ended.

Dim-visioned in the moonlight, a silent company of men moved slowly down the outer stairway of the house, and filing through the courtyard gate came out upon the street. They were twelve in number. Most of them were young men; and all of them of lowly station, as evidenced by their dress and bearing and by the provincial accent of their speech.

Forming in twos and threes and keeping well together in company, they made their way with somewhat hurried steps down the steep and rugged street of Bezetha, which, cutting athwart the

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hill, led them in most direct path to the eastern gate. They spoke but little and in constrained whispers. Apparently, they were ill at ease and anxious to escape attention; those who were not barefooted taking care to step lightly, and one or another glancing about from time to time with seeming apprehension. Of their number only two were armed, and each of these with only a common short sword, hidden beneath his cloak; the rest being without weapons, except for the walking staves which some of them carried.

Save for an occasional watchman and now and then a delayed Passover celebrant hastening homeward, the city was deserted. Only the red lights of Antonio and the twinkling rays that marked the Roman towers on Mount Zion, remained of the city's illumination. The Temple, whose gates had

An Interpretation

been thrown open during the second watch of the night, that the people might bring at once their thank offerings to God upon the conclusion of the paschal supper, was now dimmed and silent; towering in spectral whiteness beyond the black-shadowed battlements of Antonio and reflecting in cold lustre the undisputed luminance of the moon, which now alone outlined the pathway of the twelve amid the slumbering metropolis.

Their way was not long, and they soon had reached the familiar gate just north of the Temple mount. They passed through without challenge, for throughout the Passover night the Holy City was free for the coming and going of all men. And as they filed down the hill to the Kidron they relaxed their bearing of restraint; and speaking now freely one to another in

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evident relief, passed over the bridge and set out upon the road to Bethany.

“It was not for ourselves, but for your sake, Master, that our hearts were moved with fear. Great indeed has been the peril you have borne, that you might keep with us your promise to eat the Passover in Jerusalem, knowing as we do how watchful are the officers of the Sanhedrin to find opportunity to beset you and deliver you up. Would that we might take the danger upon ourselves, or that we might so much as share it with you; but in the eyes of Caiaphas and the chief priests we are not worthy of notice.”

Two of the company, remaining ever closely side by side, walked in advance and in descending the hill from the city had insensibly drawn away from the others by some little distance. It was the younger of these two who had just

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spoken—a fair-haired Galilean, gentle of voice and slender-featured, and whose beardless face bespoke a virgin youthfulness of years.

His companion pressed his hand. “You have been to me always a dear friend, John; a friend and comforter, and faithful even unto death. Truly, never had man more faithful friends than I. Each of you has held fast to me and believed in me, despite the persecutions and adversities that have come upon me—each of you, save one.”

“You speak of Judas?”

“Yes; you have questioned truly. He is no longer one of you. He has become tempted of the world and is turned from me.”

“Was it then for some evil purpose that he left us to-night? Yea, in my heart, dear Master, have I been sorely troubled, fearing that all was not well

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with him. On the morning of the fourth day, when, with James and Matthew, I came to the city, while you rested at the home of Lazarus, did I hear from a servant of Caiaphas that Judas had been at the palace of the high priest the night before. This, however, he would not acknowledge when in the evening upon our return I questioned him concerning it. Yet there has been that in his speech and his manner during the past day which I have known not how to interpret save with foreboding.”

Looking steadily before him, Jesus answered slowly, “And as your heart has feared, even so has it come to pass.”

John drew back with a start. “He has forsaken you! He would betray you!—he who has been one of us and has known you and loved you! O

An Interpretation

Master, how could he! How could it come to any man to gender such ingratitude? Scarce can I find it in my heart to contemplate a treachery so black as this. My soul is bowed in shame, that ever we have supped with him or called him brother. What thought could lie within his heart to treat you thus?—to cast off his manhood, in this the hour of your greatest peril, and forsake you for our enemies? Yea, now do I know that he left us this night at supper, that he might perchance lead them upon us while yet we thought ourselves secure within our secret meeting place. By means of the very love and confidence that we shared with him he would betray you unto Caiaphas! . . . Nay, I dare not think upon it, lest my blazing thoughts impel me to sin with mad desire for vengeance! He is become an outcast

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from God—from the kingdom of heaven—and may the Lord do unto him as befits his iniquity!”

“Nay, my dear John, judge not hastily. We know not for what cause he is turned from me. Yet would no man so forsake his friend except he were constrained by some untoward temptation. Only to the Father is it known which of us in the hour of trial shall abide in faith and strength. No man may know before it come to pass how he shall acquit himself in the presence of temptation. If, therefore, your brother fall, think not at once to brand him, but rather let your pity and compassion go forth to him; for who shall know what torture he has suffered? Therefore, judge not; but watch and pray that you be not tempted.”

“Ah, Master, such charity may be

An Interpretation

for you; but not yet am I so risen that it lies within me to give pity unto Judas! And moreover, it is beyond all thought that I could be as he. Whatever else shall befall me or in whatever manner I shall be tempted, it cannot be that my heart shall ever for one moment be turned against you—my guide, my comforter, my friend; to me the dearest and most sacred of all beings upon this earth!”

While he was yet speaking, others of the company drew near and rejoined the two; and as he finished—his voice risen with the earnestness of his feelings—one of his companions cried out impulsively:

“Yea, of a truth, has John declared for each of us! For your sake, Master, I am ready to go both to prison and to death. Though all men should be of-

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fended because of you and should turn from you, yet would I never forsake you or deny you!”

Jesus turned and smiled sadly upon him. “Aye, Peter; truly, the spirit is willing. I know that you love me and think for all time to remain steadfast—you and each of you who are with me at this hour. But there is that which is even now impending and which may come to pass before the morning cock-crow, which will offend and affright you and give cause for your tongue to deny me.”

Peter lifted his hand in solemn gesture. “Nay, Master,” he protested, his hand shaking with emotion, “you know not the faith of your disciple! Even though I be put to torture that I die, yet will I not disown you. Rather will my tongue glorify you unto the end!”

An Interpretation

As they talked, Jesus had turned aside from the road and led the way toward an orchard on the hillside. And now, drawing close to him, John laid a dissuading hand upon his shoulder in caressing gentleness. "You speak, Master, as though there were yet danger. Were it not better, therefore, that we proceed on our way to Bethany, than that we tarry here, at Gethsemane, so near to the city?"

Jesus continued onward for a few steps before replying: "Bear with me, John—you and all of you, my dear friends,—for yet a little longer. Fear not; for, believe me, nought shall come to pass but according to the will of the Father."

Passing in silence through the gateway of the enclosing wall, he entered the orchard. Here he stopped and turned to his companions: "Will you

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not abide awhile with me here? The night is calm and the garden sweet with flowers. Rest here and await my return, for I have need of prayer. . . . If in your hearts you are troubled, believe me, there is none of you whose cares or unhappiness I do not share full many fold. Yea, dear friends, in my love for you do I ask that the Father may for all time spare you the tribulation that lies within my heart this night. No, seek not to bear it with me; give to me only the surety of your abiding faith. All else have I shared with you, but this must I bear alone. Only do I speak of it, that you may know it is not without reason that I ask you now to turn aside and remain with me here while I seek comfort in communion with the Father. Beyond this, I cannot speak. Yet this will I

An Interpretation

say to you: Pray that you be spared from temptation."

Facing slowly about, he moved forward along a path leading toward the center of the orchard; his friends gazing after him in attitudes of sympathy and troubled indecision.

He had gone but a few paces, when he stopped and looked back.

"John," he called sadly, "will you not come with me? Yea, Peter, you, too, are chosen. And you, James, come also, and watch with me."

He waited for them to join him; then mutely led the way to a secluded spot in the midst of a planting of olive trees. The chosen place was an elevation overlooking the eastern wall of the orchard. An ancient oil press stood off to one side; its rough-stone cylinder softened into harmony with the garden by an

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overspreading vine. Amid the hushed reclusion it alone bespoke the touch of man. All else breathed only of the Infinite.

Stillness, tranquillity, solitude, filled the earth and air. Across the night the pallid stars bedecked the fields of heaven, while the light of the Passover moon, shimmering through the still network of olive branches, flecked the tender grass of spring with virescent silver. In the soft refulgence of the holy night Jesus and his companions stood motionless, rapt in the uninterpretable consciousness that brooded upon the world. Before them the slopes of Olivet, dimly checkered with its fields and vineyards, spread upward toward Bethany. Behind them the Temple mount rose in darkly wooded terraces, crowned with the snow-white sanctu-

An Interpretation

ary; and about them in mantling peace was the quietude of the orchard, tintured with the dreamful fragrance of its encircling garden.

Folding his hands before him, Jesus looked out upon the eastern hills, and in a voice hushed with repression he addressed his three disciples:

“Here, as you know, have I often come alone to pray to the Father. But on this night have I not the strength to bear in solitude the burden of my soul. Will you not, therefore, bide here and watch with me? I am sad at heart; sad even unto death. Yet in your presence and sustaining faith shall I be comforted and upheld.”

He paused and gazed fixedly before him. His companions offered no response. There was that in his tone which repelled as irreverent any

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thought of uttered comment. With bowed heads they awaited silently his further will.

“You will remember,” he continued, speaking with impressive quietness, “that at our supper to-night I said to you that I would be with you but a little longer. I spoke not of the coming year, nor yet of the coming month—no, nor even of the morrow. Already the hour is at hand that I must leave you. Let not your hearts be troubled to know why this must be, when in the youth of manhood’s strength I am but entered upon the Father’s work and there yet lie beyond so many fruitful years of man’s allotted life. Be not disheartened. It is expedient that I go away.

“It is for your sake and for the sake of the work that through me the Father has entrusted to your hands, that I must leave you. It is because of my

An Interpretation

love for you; because I would have you always think of me as you have known me up to this hour. And let the surety of my love remain steadfast in the remembrance that I have accounted you my friends, and that no greater proof of loving-kindness can there be, than that a man lay down his life for his friends.

“In the passing of time all things shall be made clear to you. Let your faith in God remain forever steadfast, and believe that whatsoever shall come to pass shall be for the glory of the Father.

“The words that I have said to you and the things that you shall witness concerning me, though you know not in this hour how to interpret them to your understanding, hold them nevertheless securely in your hearts; for the time will come when they will blossom, and will nourish you, and will be unto

The Passover

you a guide glorified with meaning and with power, which shall uplift you and bring you even yet more closely unto me.

“All that is needful have I now said to you, and I am finished. Yet this will I commend to you once more: Pray that you be not tempted. My Father’s work is henceforth in your hands. See, therefore, that you cherish it and sanctify it, as I have done before you, even unto the giving up of the greatest of all earthly joys that may fall to the lot of man. . . . I can speak no more. Bear with me. Give me of your love and confidence and share with me the vigil of this hour.”

In mute sympathy and acquiescence the three disciples slowly seated themselves upon the grass-covered mound near which they had been standing, and bowed each his head upon his breast.

An Interpretation

Only Peter made move to speak: "Master!" he cried in piteous outburst, reaching forth his hand. But his voice choked and he could say no more.

Jesus himself walked forward to an open space a little beyond them; and here, hidden from their view and from sight of all the world, sank upon the ground with a convulsive sob.

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The perfume of orange blossoms and the far-off murmur of a shepherd's song among the slumbering hills made manifest the stillness of the night. The full-orbed moon, floating now in the western sky in a sea of darkling clouds, illumined the landscape in fitful paleness; now lighting up the hill with wan distinctness and making visible in varied tones of shade the uprearing walls and towers of the Holy City,

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and again covering the earth with the pall of a passing cloud, black in its omen of storm.

“O Father, remove this cup from me! Spare me the further torture of this agony!”

The creeping shadows had trailed onward upon the dial of night—onward, through infinite minutes of pain, toward the morning hills. For nearly an hour the lone figure upon the ground had remained prostrate and silent. But now, raising his head and holding up his tightly clasped hands to heaven, his uncomforted and agonized soul called aloud to God for mercy. His grief had passed beyond his endurance. “And yet, O Father, if this cannot pass away except I drink it, Thy will be done.”

Rising to his feet, his face showing drawn and haggard in the pale glow of

An Interpretation

the moon, he moved forward with nervous, hurried steps toward his companions; his arms outstretched and his lips trembling in mute beseechment.

But there was no welcome, no response awaiting him. His companions gave no heed to his approach. Overcome with weariness, they lay upon the ground—asleep.

He drew close, and spoke to them; called them each by name, plaintively and with gentle entreaty. None made answer. Not one of them awoke to the appeal that stirred the night with its suffering and its pathos: “John—Peter—James—Do you not hear me? Could you not watch with me for one hour? Aye, the spirit may indeed be willing, but behold how weak is the flesh! Oh, my dear friends, pray that you be not tempted! Watch and pray, that you be spared the agony that is

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come upon me to bear this night—and to bear alone. Yea, forsaken by my friends when most I need them, do I stand utterly alone in this the hour that my heart is crucified and the shadow of death is fallen upon me!”

Wearily and with dragging feet he retraced his steps, and again fell upon his knees and raised his face to heaven.

“If, O Father, it has been Thy will so to tempt me, so to try me, forsake me not in this the hour of my life’s renunciation for Thy sake! Sustain me lest I falter. Give to me of Thy presence. Uphold my battling strength against the power of the temptation that besets me. To Thee all things are possible: Let now this cup pass away. Has not my soul fulfilled its suffering? Speak to me, Father! Answer me! Answer me!”

Was it but a grouping of the shadows,

An Interpretation

framed into being by the imagery of a troubled mind, or did his gaze reveal to him in dim reality a slender, dark-clad figure standing upon the hillside beyond the orchard wall?

Half doubtingly he stretched forth his wistful hands. The image grew more distinct. For a moment it appeared to move, to draw closer. His gaze was strained with intensity. Beneath his tears there flashed a quickened, eager light. The saddened lines upon his face grew soft with sudden brush of warmth. He leaned forward, trembling, quivering; and holding out his arms in passionate far-reaching, as if to clasp the arms outheld toward him in answering love and sympathy, he seemed about to cry aloud the name that hovered on his lips.

It was but the happening of an instant. The moon, which for a moment

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had shone through a clearing in the steadily gathering clouds, was again overcast and the hillside shrouded in obscurity. No sound, no sign gave token from the darkness, save only the distant breathing of the shepherd's call; and with hands outstretched toward Bethany, Jesus continued motionless upon his knees.

With a sudden start he aroused himself and rose hastily to his feet. Facing about and looking into the shadows toward Jerusalem, he saw in the valley below him a group of moving, twinkling lights. Vaguely and confusedly there came to him the murmur of voices and muffled footfalls. It was an intrusion upon the solitude of the hour at once ominous and compelling.

The sounds grew rapidly more distinct, while the lantern lights, flickering and agitated, were strung into file

An Interpretation

and came forward up the hillside. A body of men, their shadowy forms now and again partially revealed amid the trees, was approaching the orchard. Armed with staves and with drawn swords which flashed in the lights of the lanterns, they ascended the path with stealthy tread; quickening their steps, however, as they advanced, and following in hurried disorder the guidance of one who strode darkly in advance.

Jesus turned—hesitated—took one impulsive step toward his slumbering companions—and with a quivering moan sank to the earth, crushed and helpless.

“Abba, Father! The end is come. Unto Thee do I give up my life and the world. The cup that Thou gavest me to drink have I finished to the uttermost drop. Thy will be done.”

The Passover

Slowly, painfully, he lifted his head and raised his eyes in supplicating question: Was there to be for him no answer, no recognition?

Again the moon floated in the clear blue of the night. The gloom of the hills melted into warm and tender shades, and the earth lay glad and softly radiant in the mellow quietude. Slowly the tense form of the suppliant relaxed. The calm that hovered upon the night descended as with enfolding wings and rested upon him. His eyes grew soft with the joyed passing of pain. A light, beyond the giving of the world, overspread his countenance; and, as one illumined with peace and the understanding of all things, he spread forth his arms and gazing into heaven smiled back to the Father.

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